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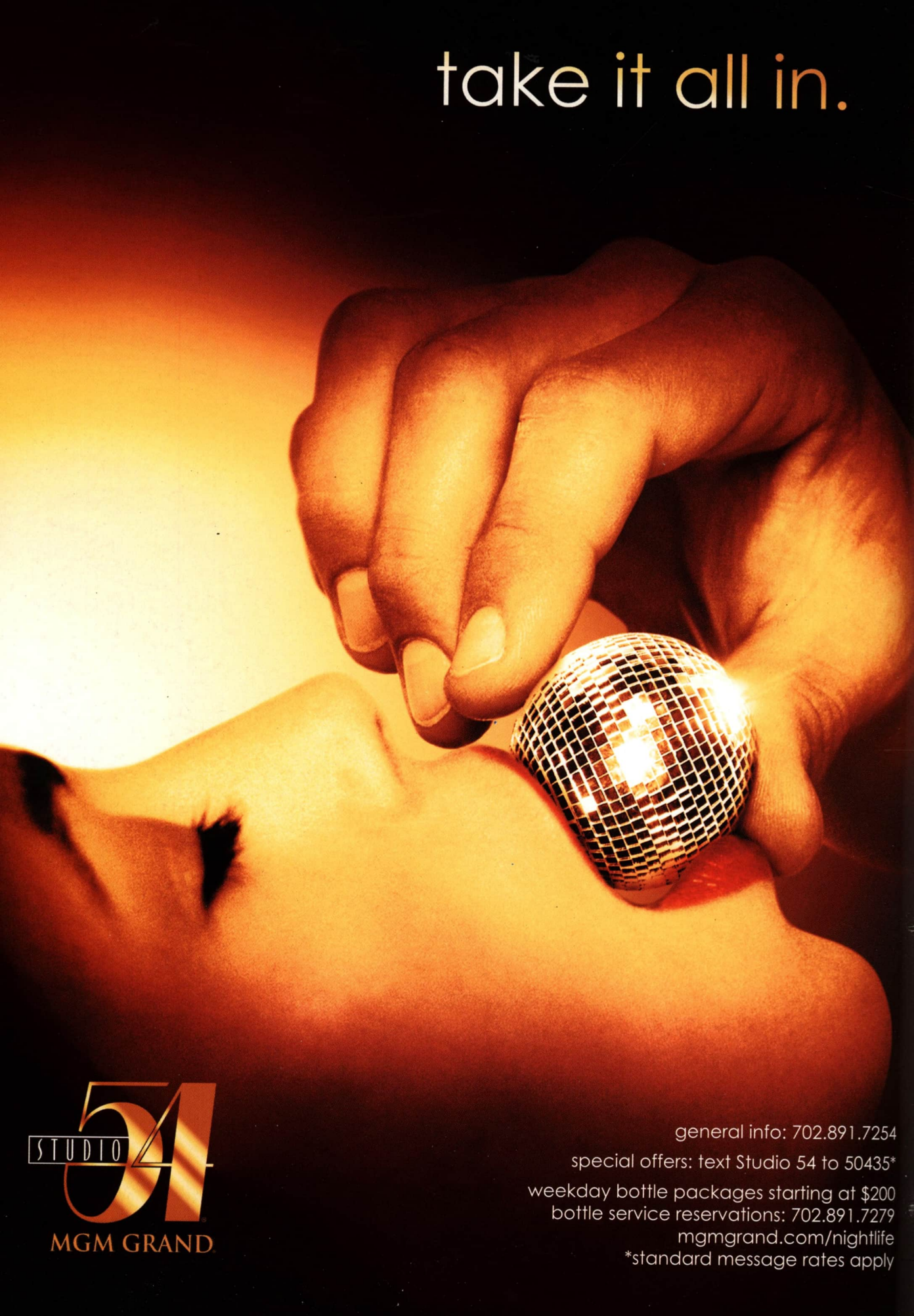
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Volume 89, No. 3 March 2010

The RING

Year-End Rummage Sale

It occurred to me while editing this Year-End Awards issue that many of the things that make my job so enjoyable really don't fit into the traditional categories. Therefore, I've decided to share some moments from the past year. They're in no particular order, just a hodgepodge of pleasant memories (and more than a few shameless plugs) that popped into my mind while thinking back over the 12 months of 2009. Blame it on my brain.

- All things Manny Pacquiao. Were would we be without him?
- "Perfect Execution" gym sessions with Bernard Hopkins, where I've learned more about the technical side of boxing than in almost 40 years at ringside.
- Ivan Goldman's latest novel, *The Barfighter*, the best boxing fiction I've read since Leonard Gardner's *Fat City*.
- Sitting next to Juan Manuel Marquez at the *Tecate Premios Deportes* award telecast and discovering that he's not only a great fighter but also a great guy.
- The privilege of publishing Dr. Margaret Goodman's uncomfortable (and often inconvenient) truths every issue. Hey, somebody has to help balance the scales with a healthy dose of reality.
- Presenting Wladimir Klitschko with THE RING heavyweight championship belt in front of more than 60,000 fans at the Veltins-Arena in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. The free gourmet food and top-shelf booze weren't bad either.
- The debut of THE RING's first monthly amateur column in decades.
- Lunch with David Haye in Vegas. Don't let the double-decapitation T-shirt put you off; he's really quite pleasant.
- Philippines correspondent Ted Lerner sending me a current photo of Pancho Villa's granddaughters. You don't get one of those every day.
- Learning to appreciate Chris Arreola. Boxing can always use a roly-poly, hard-hitting, foul-mouthed heavyweight. And so what if the big lug sobbed like a baby after Vitali Klitschko beat the beer out of him. At least he's passionate about what he does.
- Receiving an email from the relatives of Terry McGovern, saying they had learned more about their long-dead ancestor by reading Don Stradley's feature about "Terrible Terry" than they ever knew before.
- The roundtrip flight from Los Angeles to Phoenix, Arizona, and back on Oscar De La Hoya's private jet. So this is how the other half lives!
- Former publisher Stu Saks coming up with the "Love Ranch Triangle Of Death" headline for the story about the murder of Oscar Bonavena. Eat your heart out, *New York Post*!
- Watching pay-per-view fights with colleagues Bill Dettloff, Eric Raskin, and Joe Santoliquito.
- Listening to Eric and Bill's bi-monthly podcast, *Ring Theory,* on RingTV.com—an esoteric blend of profound insight and verbal slapstick.
- The honor of sitting in this chair for another year.

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[Opening Shot]

Dreadlocks Kayo Cornrows

Argentina's Gabreila Zapata (left) mixes it up with Costa Rica's Hanna Gabriel during a welterweight title fight in Nicaragua, which the undefeated Gabriel won via third-round knockout. There is no truth to the rumor that Paul Malignaggi was both women's hairstylist.

PHOTO BY ELMER MARTINEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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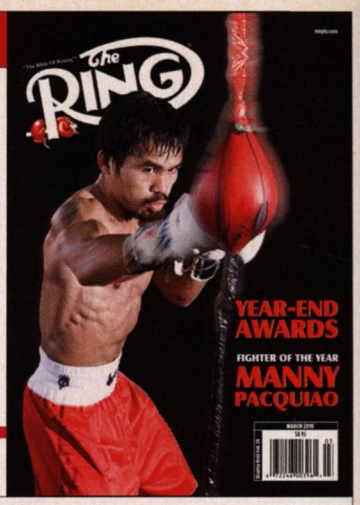

March 2010

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Cover Design by **David Romanosky**

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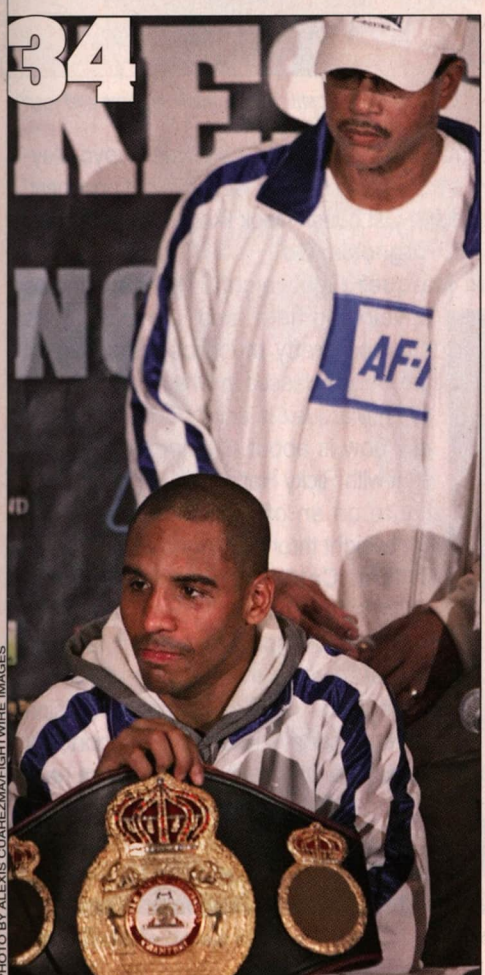

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Who Will Stay & Who Will Go?

Anyone can make a lucky guess from time to time. But back-to-back years of near-flawless predictions? You can't chalk that up to luck. Practice makes perfect, and after enough years of doing this—prognosticating as to which RING champions will still have their titles in a year's time and which won't—it seems we've simply developed a keen sense for the task.

Two years ago, we went 8-1 in predicting which of the nine champs would and wouldn't hold on to their RING belts. Last year, we pretty much duplicated the feat, going 6-1 with a slightly smaller roster of champions to analyze. The one we got wrong was cruiserweight king Tomasz Adamek, whose reign we predicted wouldn't last until the end of '09. But we nailed the rest. We told you Joe Calzaghe would retire. We told you Kelly Pavlik would make it through the year (though we got a little help from health issues on that one). We told you Ricky Hatton would become Ricky Flatton against Manny Pacquiao. We told you Juan Manuel Marquez would get past Juan Diaz and survive the year, possibly by taking a non-title fight at a higher weight. We told you Israel Vazquez wouldn't last another 12 months as 122-pound champ. And we told you Ivan Calderon would hang on for another year. Six out of seven—not too shabby. The only way to top that is by putting a zero in the loss column, so here goes with our stab at perfection:

Wladimir Klitschko (heavyweight): We all know there's only one guy at heavyweight who can beat Klitschko, and we all know that fight is never going to happen. Instead, first up for baby bro in 2010 is Eddie Chambers, who's a solid challenger, but about a 10-1 'dog. After that, who knows, it could be Alexander Povetkin, it could be David Haye—it really doesn't matter. None of them feel like the right man for the job. **Prognosis: Stay**

Tomasz Adamek (cruiserweight): The pugnacious Pole seems to have made his mind up that he's a heavyweight, but he hasn't given up his cruiserweight strap yet, presumably because he wants to leave the door open for a money fight against Bernard Hopkins. So he can lose his title one of two ways: by vacating or by getting taken to school by the craftiest old man in the game. **Prognosis: Go**

Kelly Pavlik (middleweight): "The Ghost" isn't going to be able to get away with fighting chumps on the heels of his disappointing '09 campaign, and frankly, he doesn't want to. He's a real fighter and he wants to face the best possible opposition. That means either Paul Williams or Sergio Martinez. The guess here is that HBO will push for those fights, and one of them will get made. And both opponents have the versatility and talent to take the title. **Prognosis: Go**

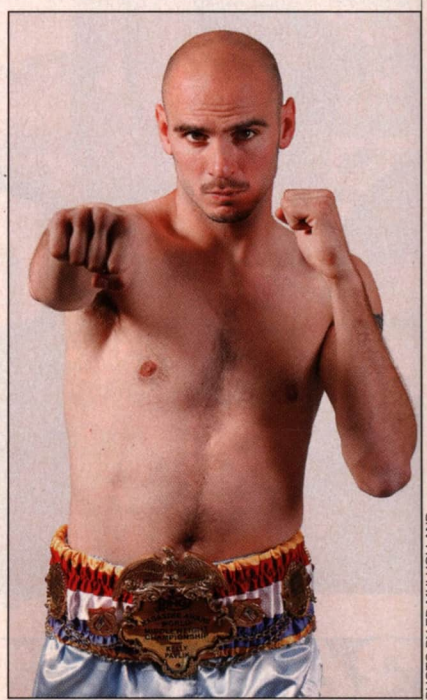
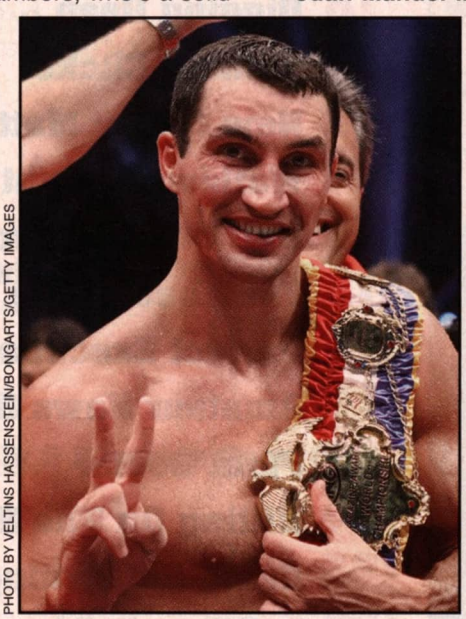


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Will Pavlik still be champion this time next year?

Manny Pacquiao (junior welterweight): By the time you read this, "Pac-Man" might already have given THE RING notice that he's done at 140 pounds. Floyd Mayweather represents his second straight welterweight opponent, and moving back down just doesn't look likely unless he loses badly on March 13. **Prognosis: Go**



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Is Wladimir a lock to keep THE RING belt another year?

Juan Manuel Marquez (lightweight): There's a theme developing here, and it involves RING champs pretty much being done with the weight classes in which they hold the titles. Marquez is another one, as all the talk now is about a junior welterweight fight with Ricky Hatton. If that gets signed, figure on an official abdication of the lightweight throne. **Prognosis: Go**

Ivan Calderon (junior flyweight): There's been talk of Calderon moving up in weight, but honestly, where's the logic in that? He's barely five feet tall; he's not outgrowing the 108-pound division anytime soon. And his best opportunity to make a little cash is right where he is now, at junior fly, against Brian Viloria. Even though "Iron Boy" is 35 and looks to be slipping, Viloria has struggled famously with slick boxers. **Prognosis: Stay**

—Eric Raskin

The IBHOF Class of 2010

The lighter-weight divisions will be center stage on June 13 when the class of 2010 is inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, as living inductees junior flyweight **Jung-Koo Chang** and featherweight **Danny Lopez** will be enshrined in the Modern category.

South Korean Chang, 38-4 (17), is arguably the finest fighter his country has ever produced. He turned pro in 1980, without benefit of an amateur career, and stopped Hilario Zapata to win the WBC 108-pound title in 1983. "The Korean Hawk" held the belt until 1988, making a division-record 15 successful defenses during his five-year reign.

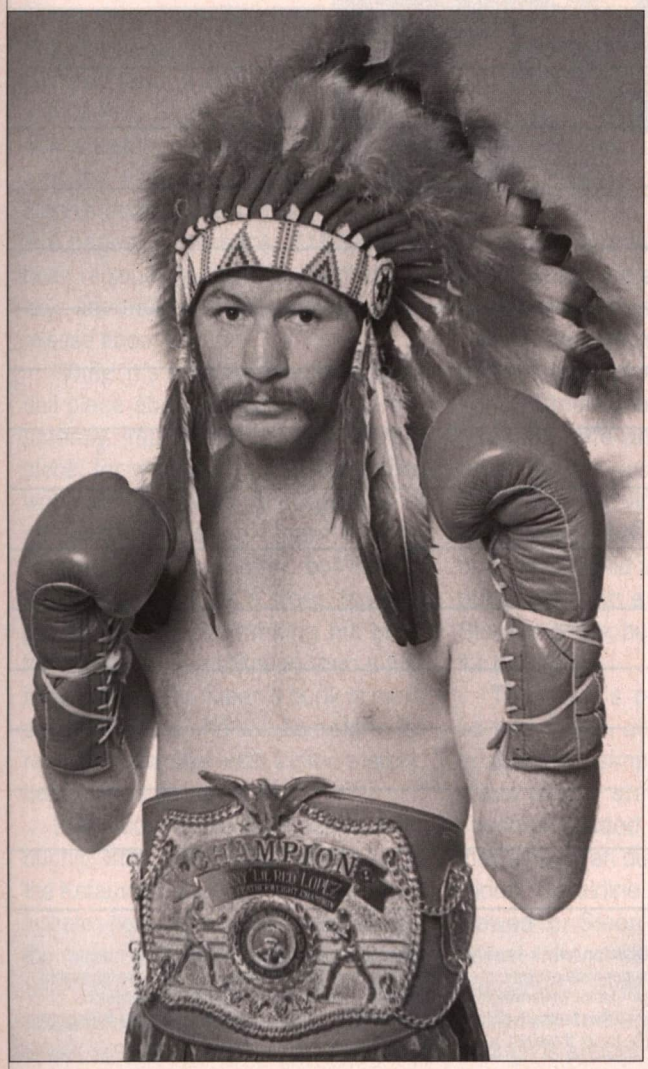
Lopez, 42-6 (39), was a popular attraction in California, and after winning a 15-round decision over David Kotey to capture the WBC featherweight title in 1976, he became a TV staple due to his exciting give-and-take style. Lopez' 15-round decision over Mike Ayala was THE RING's 1979 Fight of The Year. The hard-punching "Little Red" tallied eight successful title defenses before losing the belt in 1980.

Light heavyweight contender **Lloyd Marshall**, who died in 1997, was posthumously elected to the Modern category. Marshall compiled a 71-24-4 (36) record (including victories over nine world champions) during a pro career that began in 1936 and ended in '51, but never got a title shot.

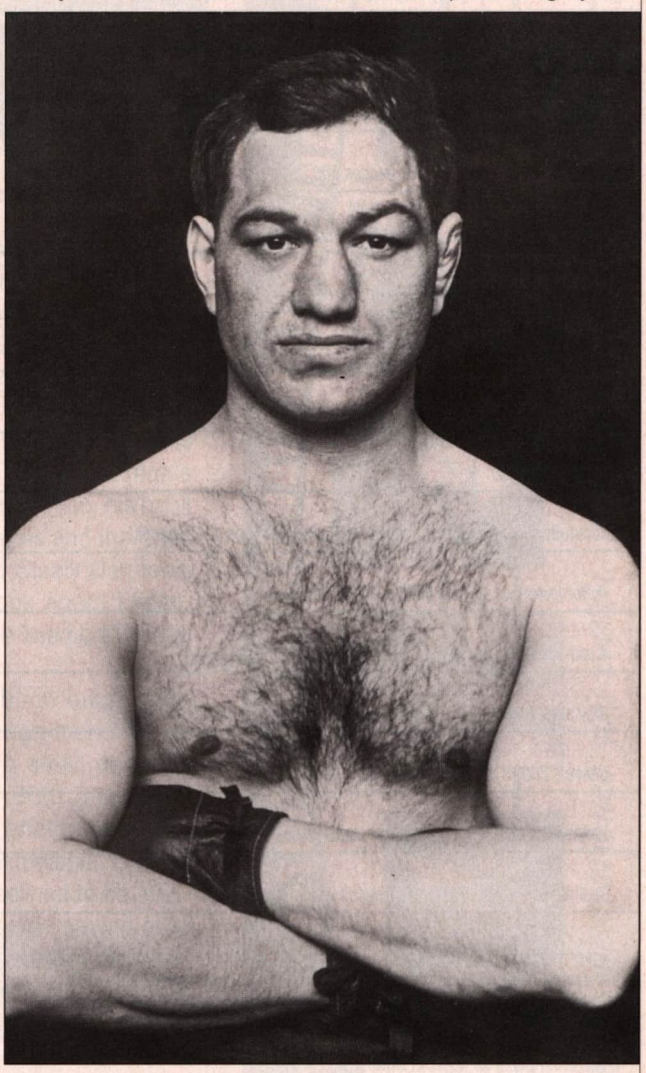
Three new inductees were voted into the Old-Timer category: Turn-of-the-century featherweight champion **Young Corbett II**, who won the title in 1901 by knocking out Terry McGovern and compiled a record of 53-20-12 (34) with 25 no-decisions before retiring in 1910; lightweight champion **Rocky Kansas**, 64-12-7 (32) with 81 no-decisions, who won the title with a 15-round decision over Jimmy Goodrich in 1925 and lost it to Sammy Mandell in '26; and light heavyweight and heavyweight contender **Billy Miske**, who compiled a record of 48-2-2 (35) with 54 no-decisions between 1913 and 1923.

"Paddington" Tom Jones, a late-18th century bare-knuckle boxer, was elected in the Pioneer category, while broadcaster **Howard Cosell** and journalist **Ed Schuyler** will be inducted into the Observer category.

Manager **Shelly Finkel**, referee/commissioner **Larry Hazzard**, promoter **Wilfried Sauerland**, and matchmaker **Bruce Trampler** were selected for the Non-Participant category.



Lopez: Elected in Modern category



Kansas: 1920s lightweight champion

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

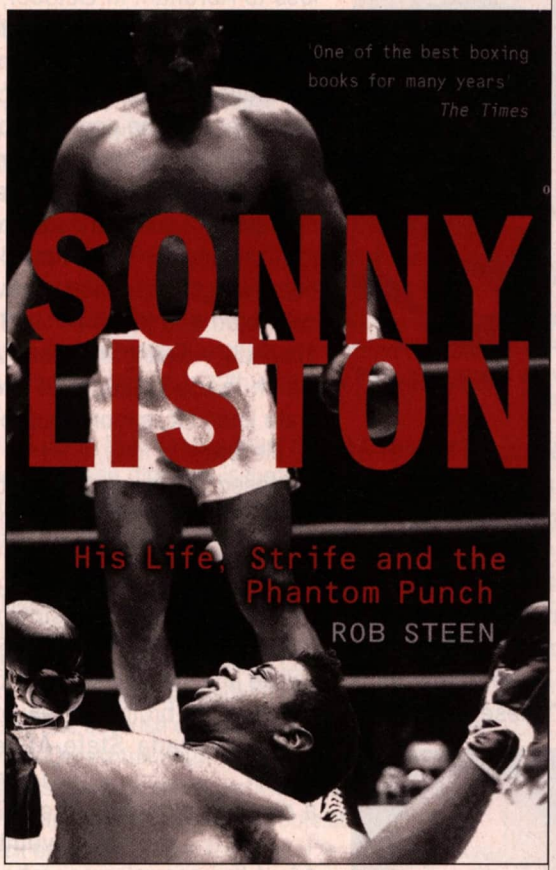
DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
11/28/09	Rico Ramos W 8 Alejandro Perez *Young Ramos showed he can box under pressure*	Showtime	jf	C	B-	C+
11/28/09	Martin Honorio W 10 John Molina *Another not-ready-for-prime-time prospect exposed on* ShoBox	Showtime	l	B-	B+	B
11/28/09	Ali Funeka D 12 Joan Guzman *Maybe all of Guzman's blood got in the judges' eyes*	HBO	l	B	B+	C
11/28/09	Lucian Bute KO 4 Librado Andrade *Andrade has an iron chin, but there is no such thing as an iron gut*	HBO	sm	A	A	B
12/02/09	Danny Garcia KO 2 Enrique Colin *TV spotlights bring out the best in Garcia*	Versus	l	C+	C+	B
12/02/09	Bernard Hopkins W 12 Enrique Ornelas *A prime example of how mastering the basics extends a career*	Versus	lh	A	C	C
12/02/09	Danny Green KO 1 Roy Jones *Another sad exit for a boxing legend*	Versus	c	B	B	B-
12/03/09	Brad Solomon W 8 Ray Robinson *Unheralded prospect knocks off touted prospect*	Versus	jw	C	B	B
12/03/09	Tim Coleman W 12 Mike Arnaoutis *Sparring partner to the stars gets a quality win*	Versus	jw	C+	B	B-
12/04/09	Euri Gonzalez W 12 Cosme Rivera *Dominican survives gutsy rally from Rivera for split decision win*	Telemundo	w	C+	B	B
12/04/09	Mike Anchondo W 8 Mauricio Herrera *Former WBO titlist looks unimpressive in win over prospect*	Showtime	w	C+	B-	C
12/04/09	Carson Jones KO 3 Tyrone Brunson *Undefeated kayo artist taken out by savvy journeyman*	Showtime	jm	C+	B	B+
12/05/09	Chris Arreola KO 4 Brian Minto *Will 2010 be the year Arreola reaches 300 pounds?*	HBO	h	B-	C	B-
12/05/09	Paul Williams W 12 Sergio Martinez *Forget horrible judging, this fantastic fight had no loser*	HBO	m	A	A	A
12/12/09	Vic Darchinyan KO 2 Tomas Rojas *Darchinyan looks ordinary until vicious one-punch kayo*	Showtime	jb	B	C+	B-
12/12/09	Timothy Bradley W 12 Lamont Peterson *The most entertaining one-sided fight of the year*	Showtime	jw	A-	A-	B
12/12/09	Victor Ortiz KO 6 Antonio Diaz *Young gun not gun-shy coming off first loss*	HBO	jw	B	B	C+
12/12/09	Paul Malignaggi W 12 Juan Diaz *Justice is served*	HBO	jw	A-	A-	B
12/12/09	Vitali Klitschko W 12 Kevin Johnson CompuBox *had Johnson only landing 5 powerpunches in 12 rounds!*	HBO	h	A-	C	D
12/18/09	Shawn Porter KO 4 Jamar Patterson *Porter looks and fights a lot like Shane Mosley*	Showtime	jw	C	C+	C+
12/18/09	Lanard Lane KO 2 Said El Harrak *A still-standing Harrak was inconsolable about the stoppage*	Showtime	w	C	B	B-
12/18/09	Fernando Guerrero KO 4 Jessie Nicklow *Why are two well-supported Maryland prospects fighting in Minnesota?*	Showtime	m	B-	B-	C+
12/19/09	Humberto Soto W 10 Jesus Chavez *Chavez, 2009's most exciting winless boxer*	PPV	l	B+	A-	B
12/19/09	Nehomar Cermeno KO 11 Alejandro Valdez *Venezuelan developing into one of boxing's best road warriors*	PPV	b	B+	B+	B+
12/19/09	Kelly Pavlik KO 5 Miguel Angel Espino *Best part of this fight is that it gave us Williams-Martinez*	PPV	m	A	C-	B-

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Boxing Bookshelf



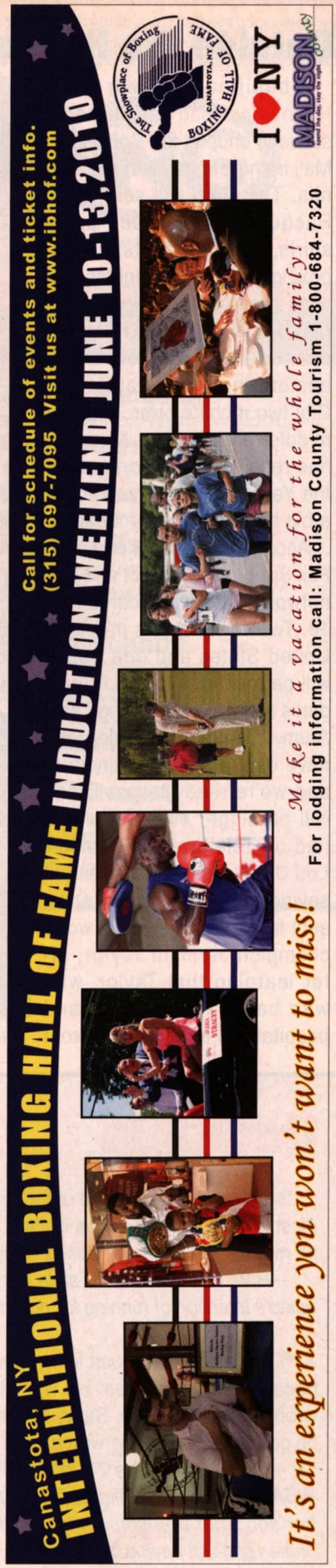
Sonny Liston's controversial life and mysterious death provided many headlines during the 1960s, and by the 1990s he'd become a kind of hard-boiled nostalgia figure. Grim-faced and menacing, Liston became everyone's favorite name-check when covering Mike Tyson, whom some considered to be the Liston of the Hip-Hop era. William Nack's 1991 *Sports Illustrated* piece on Liston kicked off a new interest in the former champion, resulting in documentaries on HBO, and ESPN. Even NBC's *Unsolved Mysteries* took a crack at the Liston story. Nick Tosches' *The Devil and Sonny Liston* followed, and in 2003 U.K. author Rob Steen gave us *Sonny Liston, His Life, Strife and the Phantom Punch*. Steen's book (Aurum Press, 256 pages, paperback, $16.95) has been reissued in the U.S., perhaps to take advantage of an upcoming film release about Liston.

While it's impossible to write a dull piece about Liston, it's also, apparently, impossible to write a great piece, for writing about Liston is like writing about sepia photographs of an unknown relative—there may be speculation and wonder, but there's not enough meat for a story. Tosches got around this by making his book feel more like a meditation than a full-blown biography. Steen's book is more straightforward and will be helpful for readers unfamiliar with Liston's story, but it, too, is a near miss.

Steen covers the time-period thoroughly, from Joe Louis' retirement to the Kefauver hearings, and carefully illustrates how Liston's career unfolded in the midst of boxing's most corrupt era. Still, there's something not quite right about Steen's approach. For one thing, Steen is a Brit, and he occasionally refers to people as "blokes." This is jarring; no one in Liston's circle ever called someone a bloke. Also, Steen doesn't seem particularly interested in boxing; he gives much more detail to Liston's legal problems than Liston's fights. Steen offers a few interesting thoughts here and there, but mostly rehashes the usual bits about man's fascination with violence. Also, his habit of quoting literary figures and the lyrics of Elvis Costello and Steely Dan feels out of place in a book about Liston. Steen is game, but he seems all wrong for the job.

The book's problem could also be that Liston, although monolithic in image, was simply a small part of a much bigger story. Both Steen and Tosches handed in brief books, as if they simply ran out of material. Liston's widow, Geraldine, declined to be interviewed for Steen's book, saying only, "What difference does it make what happened?" Even Geraldine, who was a big help to Nack's *SI* article, knows enough is enough.

—Don Stradley



Outside the Ropes

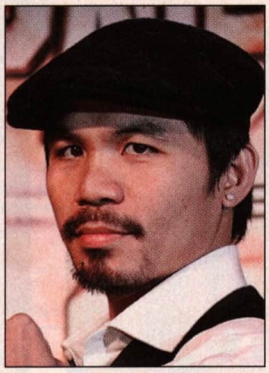


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao: Opens new store in Manila

Ubiquitous entrepreneur **Manny Pacquiao** has opened a souvenir shop at the Robinson's Mall in the Ermita district of Manila. The shop will sell "Team Pacquiao" items such as T-shirts, jackets, shorts, shoes, boxing gloves, and trinkets that were reportedly handpicked by Manny's wife, Jinkee. Pacquiao opened a similar store in his hometown of General Santos City two months prior ... Super middleweight **Arthur Abraham** has received *BoxSport* magazine's Germany Fighter of the Year award for a record fourth-straight year. "This is a big honor and really means a lot to me," said Abraham ...According to ESPN.com, **Top Rank** signed a deal with **Fox Sports en Espanol** and **Fox Sports Net** to provide the networks three fight cards a month, starting on January 16. Two of the shows per month will be from sites in the United States and one from Mexico, where Top Rank will partner with **Zanfer Promotions**. "These are regular dates and it's very exciting," said Arum. "It's great for boxing. We have our sponsors all lined up and we're ready to go. These will be bigger shows than we had on Telefura" ... Promoter **Lou DiBella** issued a statement saying he will no longer represent former middleweight world champion **Jermain Taylor**, after learning that Taylor, who was badly knocked out and hospitalized after his knockout loss to Abraham in October, will continue to participate in the "Super Six" super middleweight tournament. "It is out of genuine concern for him and his family that I am compelled to make this decision," wrote DiBella. "It is my belief that the continuation of Jermain's career as an active fighter places him at unnecessary risk" ... The U.S. Justice Department has refused a request for a posthumous pardon for **Jack Johnson**, the first black heavyweight champion who was convicted and jailed in 1913 for allegedly violating the Mann Act, which made it illegal to cross state lines for immoral purposes ... Referee **Jimmy Villers**, 56, collapsed on his way to the locker room after working the **Miguel Angel Garcia-Yogli Hernandez** bout on the **Kelly Pavlik-Miguel Espino** card in Youngstown, Ohio. Medical personnel used a defibrillator and oxygen to treat Villers, who was awake and alert when taken to St. Elizabeth Health Center. Villers is the brother-in-law of Pavlik's trainer, **Jack Lowe** ... The Nevada State Athletic Commission said that **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.** tested positive for Furosemide, a diuretic banned by the NSAC, following his fight with **Troy Rowlands** on November 14. If the commission upholds the test results, the result of the fight would be changed from a points win for Chavez to a no-decision. Chavez would also face a fine and suspension ... **Martha Chacon Acevedo** has filed a $500,000 sexual harassment lawsuit against **Miguel Cotto**. Acevedo claims Cotto made unwanted romantic advances when she worked as an administrator of a residential property the boxer owns in Puerto Rico. The Cotto family dismissed the allegations, saying they were "frivolous, empty, and total fabrication" ... Lightweight **Jorge "La Hiena" Barrios**, 33, was arrested in Buenos Aires, Argentina, after he allegedly attacked kick boxer **Jorge "Acero" Cali**. Police said Barrios was "visibly intoxicated" when he was arrested ... Canadian journeyman **Sebastien Hamel**, 30, died in Montreal in December. According to writer Dave Spencer, "Hamel always came to fight and often made things awkward for heralded prospects trying to make their mark." ... Longtime Southern California ring announcer **Danny Valdivia**, 75, died in early-December. "Danny was one of those guys who just loved the sport," said boxing judge **Marry Denkin**, who had been a decades-long friend of Valdiva.

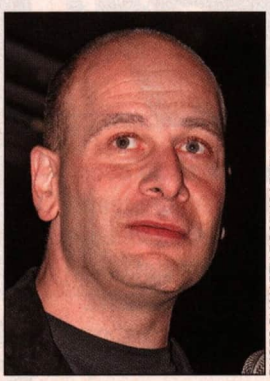


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

DiBella: Classy move

Johnson: No pardon yet

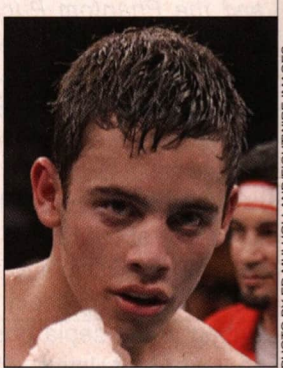


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Chavez Junior: Flunks postfight drug test

Quotable

"Manny Pacquiao is one of the greatest boxers and most lovable athletes of this lifetime, and in six months he may be just another crooked politician."

—Rafe Bartholomew, of slate.com, bemoaning Pacquiao's intention of running for public office

"I apologize to the court for my son having to appear because of his choices. He wasn't reared up in the wrong lane. Somehow, Satan caught up with him and he got pulled over in the wrong lane."

—Leola Tubbs, the 71-year-old mother of former WBA heavyweight titleholder Tony Tubbs, trying to save her son from a prison sentence for cocaine-related crimes and not paying child support

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended December 20, 2009

Heavyweights: Kevin Johnson (10th last issue) is replaced by Tony Thompson after Johnson's non-effort performance against Vitali Klitschko.

Cruiserweights: Marco Huck (fifth last issue) advances to four after beating Ola Afolabi (eighth last issue), who falls to 10. Huck's move up also pushes down Giacobbe Fragomeni (fourth last issue) to five. Danny Green enters at eight after his first-round TKO of Roy Jones. The realignment also forces out B.J. Flores (10th last issue).

Light Heavyweights: Roy Jones exits from five, while Jean Pascal (seventh last issue) goes to five based on his second decision over Adrian Diacuno, who falls from eight to nine. Vyacheslav Uzelkov (10th last issue) advances to eight and Karo Murat debuts at 10.

Super Middleweights: Lucian Bute (second last issue) takes the top spot again after stopping Librado Andrade (fifth last issue), who drops to eight. Andre Ward (first last issue) falls to two, and six through eight move up one rung each. Eduard Gutknecht enters at 10, thanks to his victory over Karoly Balzsay (10th last issue), who exits.

Middleweights: Paul Williams (third last issue) changes places with Sebastian Sylvester (second last issue) after beating Sergio Martinez. Matthew Macklin (sixth last issue) moves up to five, dropping David Lopez to six.

Junior Middleweights: Williams (first last issue) moves to middleweight. Martinez (fourth last issue) jumps to one because of a close loss to Williams. Verno Phillips (third last issue) and Sergei Dzindziruk (fourth last issue) both exit due to inactivity. Everyone rated six to 10 last issue climbs three places each, while Vanes Martirosyan comes in at nine and Zaurbek Baysangurov debuts at 10.

Welterweights: Jan Zaveck enters at 10 after his kayo of Isaac Hlatshwayo (10th last issue), who exits. Carlos Quintana (eighth last issue) is now campaigning at junior middleweight. His departure allows Luis Collazo (ninth last issue) to move to eight. Rafal Jackiewicz debuts at nine.

Junior Welterweights: Amir Khan (third last issue) switches with Ricky Hatton (second last issue) thanks to his first-round TKO over Dmitriy Salita. Juan Diaz (fifth last issue) exits following his one-sided loss to Paulie Malignaggi (sixth last issue), who moves to five. Everyone rated seven through 10 last issue moves up one place, leaving room for Mike Alvarado to debut at 10.

Lightweights: Ali Funeka (fourth last issue) changes places with Rolando Reyes (third last issue) because of his dominating performance against Joan Guzman.

Junior Lightweights: Kevin Mitchell (10th last issue) exits because he now fights at lightweight and is replaced by Ji Hoon Kim.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: No changes.

Bantamweights: Nehomar Cermeno (seventh last issue) switches with Silence Mabuza (sixth last issue) based on his victory over Alejandro Valdez.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: Koki Kameda (sixth last issue) bolts to one following his decision over Daisuke Naito (first last issue), who drops to four. The reshuffling drops Omar Narvaez (fourth last issue) and Takefumi Sakata (fifth last issue) one place each.

Junior Flyweights: Johnriel Casimero debuts at seven after his TKO of Cesar Canchila (sixth last issue), who falls to 10. Juan Carlos Reveco (eighth last issue) moves to six, thanks to stopping Ronald Barrera. Omar Nino (seventh last issue) moves to eight and Yasutaka Kuroki (10th last issue) departs.

Strawweights: Oleydong Sithsamerchai (third last issue) switches with Raul Garcia (second last issue) following his decision over Juan Palacios, who remains at eight.

Pound-for pound: No changes.

The Ring
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Welter/Welterweight
2. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
3. **Shane Mosley**
   Welterweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
6. **Nonito Donaire**
   Junior Bantamweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Celestino Caballero**
   Junior Featherweight
9. **Chad Dawson**
   Light Heavyweight
10. **Paul Williams**
    Middleweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **ringtv.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended December 20, 2009

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

PHOTO BY SANKEI/GETTY IMAGES

Flyweight Koki Kameda made the massive leap from six to one decisioning previous number-one contender Daisuke Naito.

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 53-3 (47)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 39-2 (37)
2. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 18-0 (13)
3. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 35-1 (18)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 25-1-1 (17)
5. **DAVID HAYE**
England 23-1 (21)
6. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 28-1 (25)
7. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 26-0 (21)
8. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-2 (34)
9. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 29-1 (19)
10. **TONY THOMPSON**
Washington, D.C. 33-2 (21)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Argentina 44-2-2 (24)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 37-5 (11)
3. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 32-2-1 (28)
4. **DEANDRE LATIMORE**
St. Louis, MO 20-2 (16)
5. **ALFREDO ANGULO**
Mexico 17-1 (14)
6. **RYAN RHODES**
England 43-4 (29)
7. **YURI FOREMAN**
Belarus 28-0 (8)
8. **JOACHIM ALCINE**
Canada 32-1 (19)
9. **VANES MARTIROSYAN**
Armenia 26-0 (17)
10. **ZAURBEK BAYSANGUROV**
Russia 23-1 (17)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 43-0-2 (22)
2. **STEVEN LUEVANO**
La Puente, CA 37-1-1 (15)
3. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
Mexico 39-11-2 (23)
4. **JORGE SOLIS**
Mexico 37-2-2 (27)
5. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 28-5-1 (20)
6. **MARIO SANTIAGO**
Puerto Rico 21-1-1 (14)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO**
Mexico 27-4-1 (14)
8. **RYOL LI LEE**
Japan 14-1-1 (8)
9. **ELIO ROJAS**
Dominican Republic 21-1 (13)
10. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
Cuba 16-0 (14)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 33-2 (23)
2. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM**
Thailand 39-1 (28)
3. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 27-0 (24)
4. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 35-4-3 (22)
5. **STEVE MOLITOR**
Canada 31-1 (12)
6. **BERNARD DUNNE**
Ireland 28-2 (15)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 36-2-2 (23)
8. **JEFF MATHEBULA**
South Africa 22-2-2 (12)
9. **ANTONIO ESCALANTE**
Mexico 21-2 (13)
10. **RENDALL MUNROE**
England 20-1 (8)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 28-2 (12)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
Panama 28-1-1 (10)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 21-2-2 (7)
4. **YONNHY PEREZ**
Colombia 20-0 (14)
5. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
Ghana 27-2 (22)
6. **NEHOMAR CERMENO**
Venezuela 19-0 (11)
7. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 22-3 (18)
8. **ABNER MARES**
Mexico 19-0 (12)
9. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 39-3-1 (29)
10. **SASHA BAKHTIN**
Russia 23-0 (10)

Cruiserweights

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: TOMASZ ADAMEK
Poland 39-1 (27)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 22-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 41-2-1 (31)
3. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 31-0 (17)
4. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 27-1 (20)
5. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 26-2-1 (10)
6. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 26-1-1 (19)
7. **TROY ROSS**
Canada 23-1 (16)
8. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 28-3 (25)
9. **MATT GODFREY**
Providence, RI 20-1 (10)
10. **OLA AFOLABI**
England 14-2-3 (6)

Light Heavyweights

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 29-0 (17)
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 50-5-1 (32)
3. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 49-13-2 (33)
4. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 27-6 (19)
5. **JEAN PASCAL**
Haiti 25-1 (16)
6. **TAVORIS CLOUD**
Tallahassee, FL 20-0 (18)
7. **YUSAF MACK**
Philadelphia, PA 28-2-2 (17)
8. **VYACHESLAV UZELKOV**
Ukraine 22-0 (14)
9. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 26-2 (15)
10. **KARO MURAT**
Iraq 20-0 (12)

Super Middleweights

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 25-0 (20)
2. **ANDRE WARD**
Oakland, CA 21-0 (13)
3. **CARL FROCH**
England 26-0 (21)
4. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 42-2 (32)
5. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 28-3-2 (19)
6. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Armenia 31-0 (25)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 29-1 (20)
8. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 28-3 (21)
9. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ**
Germany 36-2 (22)
10. **EDUARD GUTKNECHT**
Kazakhstan 18-0 (7)

Middleweights

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 36-1 (32)

1. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 33-2-1 (14)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 38-1 (27)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 32-3 (15)
4. **KHOREN GEVOR**
Armenia 30-4 (16)
5. **MATTHEW MACKLIN**
England 26-2 (18)
6. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 38-12 (23)
7. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 37-3 (23)
8. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 22-1 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
Germany 28-0 (10)
10. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-5-1 (25)

Welterweights

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 50-3-2 (38)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 46-5 (39)
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 40-0 (25)
4. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 34-2 (27)
5. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Ghana 35-3 (20)
6. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 37-6 (27)
7. **ANDRE BERTO**
Winter Haven, FL 25-0 (19)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 30-4 (15)
9. **RAFAL JACKIEWICZ**
Poland 35-8-1 (18)
10. **JAN ZAVECK**
Slovenia 28-1 (16)

Jr. Welterweights

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 50-3-2 (38)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
Palm Springs, CA 25-0 (11)
2. **AMIR KHAN**
England 22-1 (16)
3. **RICKY HATTON**
England 45-2 (32)
4. **DEVON ALEXANDER**
St. Louis, MO 19-0 (12)
5. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 27-3 (5)
6. **JUAN URANGO**
Colombia 22-2-1 (17)
7. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 25-3 (13)
8. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
Argentina 27-1 (26)
9. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Ukraine 31-3-1 (13)
10. **MIKE ALVARADO**
Denver, CO 26-0 (18)

Lightweights

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 50-5-1 (37)

1. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 26-0 (26)
2. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 26-2 (21)
3. **ALI FUNEKA**
South Africa 30-2-3 (25)
4. **ROLANDO REYES**
Mexico 31-4-2 (20)
5. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 25-3 (12)
6. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 29-0 (19)
7. **PAULUS MOSES**
Namibia 25-0 (17)
8. **MIGUEL ACOSTA**
Venezuela 26-3-2 (20)
9. **ANTONIO DEMARCO**
Mexico 23-1-1 (17)
10. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 35-2-1 (17)

Jr. Lightweights

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 50-7-2 (32)
2. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
Gilroy, CA 25-1-1 (17)
3. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 29-4 (12)
4. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
Puerto Rico 23-0-1 (14)
5. **MALCOLM KLASSEN**
South Africa 24-5-2 (15)
6. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 37-4-1 (19)
7. **JUAN CARLOS SALGADO**
Mexico 21-0-1 (15)
8. **JORGE LINARES**
Venezuela 27-1 (18)
9. **VITALI TAJBERT**
Kazakhstan 19-1 (6)
10. **JI HOON KIM**
South Korea 19-5 (16)

Jr. Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Armenia 33-2-1 (27)
2. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 13-1-1 (8)
3. **SIMPHIWE NONGQAYI**
South Africa 16-0 (6)
4. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 30-6-2 (22)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 34-3 (27)
6. **KOHEI KONO**
Japan 24-4 (8)
7. **NONITO DONAIRE**
Philippines 22-1 (14)
8. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
Japan 15-2 (11)
9. **DAIGO NAKAHIRO**
Japan 21-2-1 (8)
10. **DRIAN FRANCISCO**
Philippines 18-0-1 (14)

Flyweights

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 22-0 (14)
2. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 74-3-1 (39)
3. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 48-1-1 (20)
4. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 35-3-3 (22)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 30-0-2 (19)
6. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 35-5-2 (16)
7. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
South Africa 25-2 (16)
8. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
Panama 19-1 (14)
9. **ZOLANI TETE**
South Africa 12-0 (11)
10. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
Mexico 30-5-1 (23)

Jr. Flyweights

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 33-0-1 (6)

1. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 26-2 (15)
2. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 22-1-1 (18)
3. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 26-4-1 (20)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 37-6 (21)
5. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 29-2-2 (20)
6. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 22-1 (12)
7. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
Philippines 14-0 (8)
8. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 28-3-1 (11)
9. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 47-13-7 (23)
10. **CESAR CANCHILA**
Colombia 28-3 (22)

Strawweights

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 24-0 (20)
2. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 33-0 (12)
3. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 27-0-1 (16)
4. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 20-0 (15)
5. **MILAN MELINDO**
Philippines 18-0 (5)
6. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 25-1-3 (14)
7. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 23-5-1 (20)
8. **JUAN PALACIOS**
Nicaragua 26-3 (21)
9. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 62-8-5 (31)
10. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 23-4 (9)

By Jeff Ryan

Love Story

Just in case your significant other hasn't been dropping hints with the frequency of Manny Pacquiao dropping sparring partners, let me remind you that Valentine's Day is once again upon us. Those of us who spend too much time hanging around boxing may not have even noticed because, well, it's never been a very important holiday in the sport.

In the fight game, where Bengay and sweaty underarms pass for aromatherapy, love is rarely in the air. Most fighters probably think Russell Stover is one of the judges who scored their last bout, and that FTD is some new kind of transmitted disease. Boxing's favorite archer? That has always been Joey, not Cupid. Heck, it's not that February 14th *never* gets mentioned. When it does, though, it's only to recall the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre," the night Sugar Ray Robinson pummeled Jake LaMotta and lifted the middleweight crown in Chicago Stadium.

Since love is a many splendored thing, as the song goes, I'm not about to let yet another Valentine's Day go by without proper acknowledgement. For starters, I'm giving Drian "I Left My Heart in San" Francisco and Winky "If Loving You Is Wrong, I Don't Want To Be" Wright new nicknames. I'm pestering the editors to make Lovemore Ndou THE RING Fighter of the Month. And in a truly rare display of affection, I'm revealing to the world all of the things that make me really love the Sweet Science. In no particular order, they are …

No parameters: Pacquiao vs. Floyd Mayweather is the battle everyone wants to see. So the promoters get together, work out the details, draw up contracts, and announce yet another history-making event. We don't have to hope that Pacquiao secures a playoff berth as a wildcard or that Mayweather advances past the quarterfinals in order to make it happen. This isn't football or tennis. Nor is it golf, where fans keep waiting for Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson to go head to head one day on the back nine at The Masters, but could end up waiting forever.

Muscleman Ken Norton liked to say, "Whatever the mind can conceive, the body can achieve." Well, in boxing, whatever matchups the fans can conceive, promoters with site-fee guarantees and pay-per-view revenue splits can achieve.

Changing playing fields: Let's see how the stalker fares in a bigger ring than he's used to, or how the runner navigates suddenly in claustrophobic quarters. In their last meeting, they used eight-ounce Reyes mitts, the punchers gloves. Now, in the rematch, it's 10-ounce Everlast. Sometimes a canvas is spongy, and other times it's like concrete with a Corona logo painted on it. Just think how much more entertaining the

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Ryan likes round-card girls and Hopkins

NBA would be if some of its courts were 94 feet long, others were only 86 feet, and a few stretched to 102.

Bernard Hopkins: My life on the boxing beat is divided into two stages, the 10 years that I worked as a full-time staff member and the 16 years that I've been a freelancer. Though they make me feel old, the guys who were campaigning during Stage I of my career, and are still hanging in there, hold a special place in my heart. What separates "B-Hop" from the Roy Joneses and Evander Holyfields, though, is that he's still good.

Round-card girls: Unless an arena is devoid of scoreboards and full of amnesiacs, there's no reason that a woman should have to carry a sign around the ring to remind everyone which round is forthcoming. It makes even less sense that the aforementioned walking billboard should have to wear a bikini and high heels to do the job. But I've yet to hear any guy complain about all those boobs and bellybuttons. In fact, most of them would tell you that round-card girls just might be the greatest idea since the double jab.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Few things are as exciting as a come-from-behind kayo

Showtime's super middleweight tournament: It has its flaws, such as neglecting to include Lucian Bute in the mix and allowing Jermain Taylor to keep lacing on the gloves after suffering yet another scary knockout. But in my mind, there's no such thing as a bad pro tournament. The heavyweight unification tourney that crowned Mike Tyson in the '80s was a success, as was the four-man middleweight scrum won by Bernard Hopkins in 2001. The WBA heavyweight competition of '67-'68 was a bit before my time, and it was heavily criticized, but it still provided some intriguing pairings and upsets. Now comes word that HBO is trying to put together a junior welterweight tournament for 2010. Bottom line: If it has a bracket, I'm going to track it.

No off-season: Sure, there are times when the schedule is thin and it seems like eons since there's been a traffic-stopping superfight, but boxing doesn't pull the shades down and lock the doors the way that baseball, football, basketball, and hockey do for a few months each year. The fight game doesn't need a "Hot Stove League" or a calendar to count down the days until pitchers and catchers report. Its pitchers and catchers report just about every weekend.

If you don't catch them on the 29 weeks that they'll be featured on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* in 2010, then they'll show up on HBO, Showtime, Telemundo, pay-per-view, or at a basketball arena, casino-hotel, or catering hall near you.

Trunks and robes: The days of Muhammad Ali, in the white trunks with the black stripes, squaring off with Floyd Patterson, in the black trunks with the white stripes, are long gone. Today's fighters sport more colors than a Jackson Pollock painting and are decorated with as many ads as a skyscraper in Times Square. Gotta love the fashion statements. Some of these guys don't punch in sequence, but they have no problem punching in sequins.

Waiting for the scores to be read: It's one of the great anticipatory moments in sports. The longer the wait, the more nervous the paranoid among us get. Are they doctoring the scorecards? Is there a mistake? When I hear, "And we have a *split* decision," a knot always forms in my stomach and my heart beats just a little bit faster.

Postfight embraces: The Stanley Cup playoffs have that great tradition of the handshake line at the conclusion of a series, and sometimes opposing football teams gather for a postgame prayer, but there is no more instant recognition of a rival's effort or better display of sportsmanship than two fighters hugging (and sometimes even kissing) literally seconds after their contest is over.

Come-from-behind, final-round knockouts: Carl Froch vs. Jermain Taylor, Julio Cesar Chavez vs. Meldrick Taylor, Mike Weaver vs. John Tate, LaMotta vs. Laurent Dauthuille, and on and on. What they all proved was that it is possible to hit a seven-run homer or score a nine-point touchdown in the fight game. It *really* ain't over until the final bell sounds.

Fighter interviews: In just the ones that I've conducted, boxers have revealed everything from a) serious thoughts of suicide, to b) explicit details of their sex lives, to c) a desire to break an opponent's cheekbone "to see what it looks like pushed in," to d) not remembering what one's own daughter's first name was. Take the most candid athlete in any other sport, get him drunk, inject him with truth serum, then waterboard him, too, and *maybe* you'll get the kind of true responses to your questions that fighters routinely provide. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Convicted Steroids Dealer Is Back!

The "Super Six" tournament is a fine vehicle all right, but look closer and you'll see the fenders already have a couple dings in them.

First and foremost, cheat-meister Victor Conte, who's done a stretch in the can for distributing illegal steroids to conniving and desperate athletes, is peddling chemicals and services to contestant Andre Ward, whose star shined so much brighter after he overwhelmed formidable Mikkel Kessler in the first tournament round. And yes, Ward used Conte's wares before the match.

Another customer has been heavyweight Eddie Chambers, who's set to challenge RING champion Wladimir Klitschko in March.

Ward, a religious young man, contends that Conte, a fellow San Francisco Bay resident, "deserves to be forgiven" and is therefore worthy of our trust. Yes, forgiveness is a virtue of indisputable power and grace, but no matter how contrite they may be, you don't hire convicted child molesters to work at day care centers. Conte should find another line of work.

His Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative (BALCO) was a pestilence that infected a broad range of sports before the cops raided it in 2003. He specialized in distributing steroids along with chemicals that made it difficult or impossible to trace them. Customers included Shane Mosley and Giants outfielder Barry Bonds, who is under indictment for perjury and obstruction of justice in connection with his Conte transactions.

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Conte-customer Ward digs to Kessler's body

Conte, to prove that his new shop is on the up and up, put a different name on the door. Out with the bad old BALCO and in with SNAC (Scientific Nutrition for Advanced Conditioning). "I'm clean," he says. He also distributes a quack apparatus that he contends provides "intermittent hypoxic training," which is supposed to stimulate high altitude and trigger the body's production of red blood cells. Ward, who bought one for $4,000, told the *Los Angeles Times*' Lance Pugmire that he did 10 or 11 sessions on the thing before the Kessler fight.

I found no evidence that Conte has any degrees, certificates, or training in medicine, sports nutrition, or oxygen-depleting electronic gizmos. Before he got into alchemy, garage chemistry, and lung machines, he played bass guitar in rock and jazz groups. No, I'm not kidding.

Travis Tygart, CEO of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, said he doubts the value of Conte's con-

PHOTO BY DAVID PAUL MORRIS/GETTY IMAGES

Conte speaks with the media after his sentencing in the BALCO case

traption and doesn't trust what's in his substances. The agency, funded by a government grant, is responsible for implementing the World Anti-Doping Code in the U.S.

Said Tygart of Conte: "For the life of me, I can't imagine why anyone would associate with someone like this who's made so many mistakes in the past."

In other words, with all the vitamin shops in all the towns in all the world, why do Ward and Chambers have to walk into Conte's?

Ward said he diligently "read all the labels."

Chambers told Pugmire that Conte must be straight "because so many people are watching him."

Among the many problems presented by creeps like Conte is the atmosphere of mistrust and mass paranoia they create. If you play center for the Chicago Bears and you figure too many of the 40 or 50 other guys trying out for your position are on the juice, and lots of the nose guards who line up six inches from you are too; the temptation to go over to the dark side is strong. If Jermain Taylor keeps his date to fight Ward in March, he's got enough trouble waiting for him without having to worry about Conte's chemical contrivances.

Scientists have linked the use of anabolic steroids to high blood pressure, liver damage, and dangerous changes in the structure of the left ventricle of the heart.

For the record, Mosley, who's admitted injecting Conte's products in his abdomen before his second fight with Oscar De La Hoya, maintains he didn't know they were illegal steroids and has a suit pending against Conte.

More Super Six Trouble: Lucian Bute's impressive fourth-round kayo over tough Librado Andrade was a sharp reminder that the tournament includes most, but not all the best super middleweights. Bute is pretty much shut out of big match-ups in his own division until the middle of 2011. Showtime did a great job rounding up fighters, but the fact that the first Bute-Andrade contest was on *ShoBox* and the second on HBO makes me suspicious that Showtime deemed him insufficiently loyal.

Speaking Of Loyalty: Promoter Gary Shaw now says he wants a rematch between Nonito Donaire and his on-top-again Vic Darchinyan. Good. Previously he'd refused to do business with "disloyal" Donaire, who'd left Shaw for Top Rank.

A Tale Of Two Cards: Fight fans had one of those hectic Saturday nights a while back, with Tim Bradley and Lamont Peterson duking it out on Showtime, while

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Bute is pretty "super" in his own right

Paulie Malignaggi and Juan Diaz fought their rematch on HBO. It took some industrious TIVOing and taping to see both cards, but if you did, it was worth it. Both lived up to their promise.

Note, however, that Malignaggi-Diaz, held in the middle of a real city (Chicago), drew about 6,000 fans, according to the *Chicago Sun Times*. Bradley-Peterson, fought in a desert casino 140 miles east of Los Angeles, drew 2,200. Yes, Malignaggi and Diaz were better known, but if they'd fought 140 miles from Chicago it's hard to imagine 6,000 fans driving all that way to watch a contest they could see in their living room. You want fans in the seats? Put fights where fans live.

Malignaggi's people looked eager to challenge sharpshooter Amir Khan in the UK, but Malignaggi-Bradley wouldn't be such a bad idea either. I don't think Malignaggi could beat rising star Bradley, but we'd all have fun watching him try. There are two kinds of fight fans: those who enjoy watching Malignaggi stick-and-move and bamboozle his opponents and those who need to get themselves educated.

Note to referees: Malignaggi uses that left elbow as a third fist. Don't let him get away with it.

Another Thing: I'm tired of fighters, football teams, etc. who assume that God takes a particular interest in who wins their contests. Given the degree of poverty, disease, tyranny, and injustice around the world, such pronouncements are simplistic and borderline narcissistic.

Prepare For Blood: We're all delighted to see the superb Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez recovered enough from their thrilling trilogy to do it again, providing they really are okay enough to compete. But the way their styles match up, they're mutual poison. Contest number four, set for L.A.'s Staples Center on May 22, should offer them a bigger payday than their previous wars. I sincerely hope it's worth it. You want to pray, Andre Ward? Pray for them.

Grow Up, Dawson: There's something unseemly about Chad Dawson taunting and calling out the 45-year-old Bernard Hopkins. Sure, it gets frustrating when a fighter can't find those big-money match-ups, but at this stage of his career, Hopkins shouldn't be subject to the same matchmaking rules as everyone else. The fact that he can fight anyone at all is a miracle.

Futch One: While other general sports columnists discharge the same old flatulence about how to "save" boxing, Bill Dwyre of the *L.A. Times* turned conventional wisdom on its head, exulting that "we have something huge to

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Duel in the desert

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Vazquez will renew his rivalry with Marquez in May

look forward to in sports," namely, the March 13 superfight between Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao. "Thanks, boxing," he concluded. "We needed this."

Dwyre, by the way, also dug up the reason Chris Arreola's trainer Henry Ramirez is called "Electric." He got into a brawl outside a club and cops had to use a Taser to get him under control.

Futch Two: Referee Jack Reiss did a fine job sorting out the origins of the cuts on Kessler's face, which is why it went to the scorecards for a technical decision rather than a TKO. Reiss, a retired firefighting captain, has applied to be chief inspector for the California commission, but I expect he knows too much about boxing for the paper pushers to give him the job. I wish I were kidding.

Magoos One and Two: The lights are out in Quebec's Pepsi Coliseum and most of us have gone on our merry way, but we should remember the names Jean-Guy Brousseau and Alan Davis, who scored Joan Guzman-Ali Funeka a 114-114 draw, robbing yet another African fighter. Funeka won in every way possible. Everyone knew. Shocking. Disgusting. Brousseau and Davis should never work again.

Magoo Three: Pierre Benoist's 119-110 score for Paul Williams over Sergio Martinez was a turd in the holiday punch bowl. I was pretty sure of my score, 114-113 Martinez, but I have no Magoos or nasty names for Julie Lederman or Lynn Carter, who had it, respectively, 114-114 and 115-113 Williams. It was a close contest. Benoist makes me ill.

More About Lousy Judging: Consider that the above Magoo recipients each had 12 rounds to score and got at least half of them wrong. It's not one bad call, which you occasionally see in baseball, football, and basketball. It's a lengthy series of wrong calls by the same people. Where would a first-base umpire be if he got only half of his calls right?

To train competent judges, you find promising candidates and sit them next to old masters like Pat Russell and Marty Denkin who explain their scores as they go along. Trainees should do this for at least 140 rounds. Toward the end of the cycle, the trainees must defend their own scores. If they pass muster on all this, you'll get judges you can trust, providing they're honest. ■

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

What fight was Benoist watching?

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

It remains uncertain whether Brazilian middleweight Cleber Argente Alves also has a tattoo where the sun doesn't shine, but we at least know he has this one on the back of his head. His sun got eclipsed in his most recent fight, however, as Dominik Britsch TKO'd Alves in the fifth round in Germany in December.

PHOTO BY CHRIS BERNACCHI/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

We hope Chicago Blackhawks mascot Tommy the Hawk likes the taste of hair extensions. The playful Paulie Malignaggi was kind enough to let somebody else's mouth take center stage for this photo, taken while the junior welterweight contender was in the Windy City for his rematch with Juan Diaz.

PHOTO BY TORSTEN BLACKWOOD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Who ever thought we'd see the day when Roy Jones would have been wise to cut a Julius Francis deal and sell advertising space on the soles of his shoes? Luckily, the Air Jordan logo is on there, so at least Nike got its money's worth out of Jones' 122-second defeat Down Under against Danny Green.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

No doubt about it, the best detail in this picture is the smitten teenage girl's right hand attempting to take hold of Wladimir Klitschko's hand as he snaps a photo. No word on whether she also has text messages from Tiger Woods on her phone.

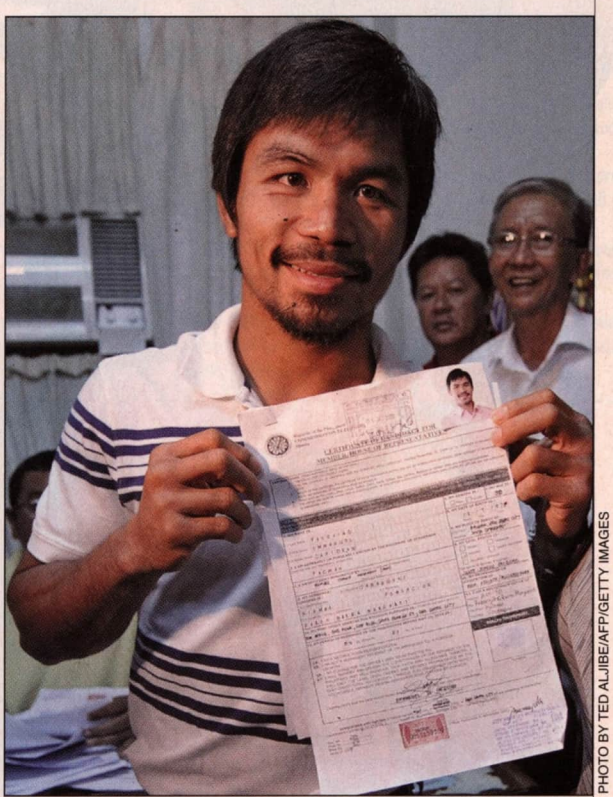


PHOTO BY TED ALJIBE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

How big is Manny Pacquiao in the Philippines? Every piece of paper printed in the country now has Manny's picture in the upper right-hand corner. Just kidding, of course. Pacquiao is actually holding his Certificate of Candidacy, which he received upon making official his run for a congressional seat in his homeland in the May 2010 elections.

By Michael Bradley
PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Matt Korobov Middleweight

You're going to hear from them. You can be sure of that. They will be criticizing Top Rank, launching heat about how it needs to step things up. To get it moving along. More rounds. Better competition. A quicker path.

They will, of course, be wrong. Just like they were about Kelly Pavlik. He took a longer route climbing to the top than some wanted and all he has on his resume is the middleweight world championship. Matt Korobov may never get that far, but don't worry about the pace of his journey. Even if it takes a little longer than some people would like, he doesn't mind. With everything that Korobov has experienced and been through, another year or so isn't going to make a big difference.

Pro Record

2008		
Nov. 1	Mario Evangelista, Las Vegas, NV	KO 3
Dec. 13	Jason Wahr, Atlantic City, NJ	KO 1
2009		
Jan. 24	Roberto Florentino, Los Angeles, CA	KO 1
Feb. 21	Cory Jones, New York, NY	KO 4
May 2	Anthony Bartinelli, Las Vegas	KO 2
June 13	Loren Myers, New York	W 4
June 27	Benjamin Diaz, Atlantic City	KO 1
Nov. 14	James Wincheste, Las Vegas	W 6
Dec. 19	Ken Dunham, Youngstown, OH	KO 3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
9	9	0	0	7

So, settle back and learn about this left-handed Russian, who slogged through more than 300 amateur fights, served his time in the military, and endured more than a decade of rigid training just to get a chance at the professional life. You may be impatient, but he sure isn't.

"I'm so happy," he said. "I'm living good. I have a new coach [trainer Kenny Adams] and I'm working hard. I'm ready to fight."

The hard work thing, that's no problem. When Korobov first started training in the U.S., he was going at it four hours a day. Now he does a tight 90 minutes, the better to keep something in the tank. When he steps into the ring, it's for about four rounds, six max. He's building. He's growing.

"Matt has the potential to be a great fighter, but we want to give [Adams] the time to make him great," said Cameron Dunkin, Korobov's manager.

The timeline continues from fight to fight, but it begins, really, about 11 years ago, when Korobov made the decision to move from his hometown of Orotukan, a small burg in the far eastern reaches of Russia, to Moscow, 8,100 miles away, in order to train. Korobov had played basketball, soccer, and ice hockey as a youth, but boxing was his first love and he was good at it. It was 1998, and the Russian economy had collapsed under the ham-handed management of President Boris Yeltsin. Unless you owned a giant petrochemical company or the mining rights to half of Siberia, things were tough. Real tough. What compounded Korobov's move west was his parents' decision to flee the country for the United States. If Korobov wanted to train in Russia, he would do so alone, while his parents bolted for Florida.

"It was so hard for me," he said. "I know it was better for my family, because of the economy, but it was better for my future to stay than to go to the United States."

(Continued on Page 108)

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GOING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

Hopkins & Jones Will Meet Again... In The Hall Of Fame!

By William Dettloff

It was with equal parts cynicism and ambivalence that most of us greeted the news that, provided they got past tune-ups, long-time professional adversaries Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones would renew acquaintances in a prize ring in 2010. Certainly, this reluctance was in part due to the fighters' blatant violation of the unwritten law that

PHOTO BY TORSTEN BLACKWOOD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

While Hopkins celebrated his 50th pro victory, in his hometown of Philadelphia (left), earlier the same day Jones was knocked out in Australia (opposite page), which killed any chance of a rematch between them.

Danny Green walks away from Jones after flooring him in the first round with a right to the head. Jones beat referee Howard John Foster's count, but the fight was stopped later that round with Jones under heavy fire and not punching back.

PHOTO BY GREGG PORTEOUS/NEWSPIX/GETTY IMAGES

says no two boxers may meet whose combined age approximates the tenure of the average Nevada boxing official. But that wasn't all of it. Too much time had passed. Too much had happened. Both got old, as far as fighters go. And wealthy. Really wealthy. Jones got fragile. And, less forgivably, mortal.

Hopkins got smart, which is always good for a fighter when it happens, but not so for business. The smarter a fighter is in the ring the less he gets hit, and while the faithful hardcore get their jollies watching a ring genius slip and slide, the less evolved majority prefer bloody mayhem. You can't blame them.

Moreover, it seemed the two had, through the twin vices of pride and greed, allowed to slip away what would have been a significant and meaningful fight seven or eight years ago. They squandered it when it would have meant something, and sports fans don't need a lot of encouragement to hold a grudge against an athlete, or, in this case two, when it appears the spirit of competition has been sacrificed over something so trivial as money.

As it turns out, we won't have to face the question of whether to support the match, because, despite Hopkins' assertions to the contrary, it won't happen. Danny Green's surprising first-round smackdown of Jones in front of thousands of hysterical Australians in Sydney *(see sidebar on page 31)* made that a certainty, and no amount of promotional gimmickry will change it.

Hopkins insistence after his win over Enrique Ornelas in Philadelphia that the fight with Jones was still viable was bizarre enough that promoter Gary Shaw, who handles top light heavyweight Chad Dawson, couldn't resist the opportunity to needle Hopkins and, by association, Richard Schaefer of Golden Boy Promotions, Hopkins' promoter and employer.

"Inasmuch as Bernard stated during his postfight press conference that he wanted to pursue the rematch against Roy Jones rather than fight Chad Dawson, I wanted to offer a slot on Chad's next undercard for that fight," Shaw said in a press release.

"If Bernard decides to take on Danny Green instead, please wish him luck for me and know that I'm hopeful he will not break Roy's record of 122 seconds."

Shaw's teasing notwithstanding, Hopkins, at 45 years old, has many options before him that do not include Jones, some more interesting than others, and indeed may have agreed to avail himself of one of those by the time you read this. The broader question involves how and why the two one-time rivals—and future first-ballot Hall of Famers—have arrived at the stations at which they find themselves today, especially relative to where they started and to the result of their fight 16 years ago, won by Jones and with not a lot of difficulty, thank you very much.

If someone had told you after Jones' win in 1993 that both men would still be fighting in their 40s and that Jones would be pancaked by a relatively average talent like Green, while Hopkins would be viewed as an all-time great, you wouldn't have believed it. But here we are. What gives?

"Roy Jones was very gifted. And as age comes on, gifts start to fade," Naazim Richardson, Hopkins' trainer, told THE RING. "Bernard was taught. You're a grown man, but I bet if I asked you to roll off your ABCs, you'd roll off those ABCs flawlessly. Because they were taught to you in your childhood. When something is taught and drilled into you, you can carry it for a lifetime. But a gift wears off. I bet you can't run as fast as you could when you learned those ABCs. I'll bet you can't do that anymore. That's the difference between Roy and Bernard right now."

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

After a slow start, Hopkins, who had not fought in more than a year, began to score more and more. Ornelas proved tough and resilient, but couldn't cope with B-Hop's experience and superior technique. "The Executioner" really opened up in the 12th and final round and gunned for the knockout (below).

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

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Richardson also agrees with the widely held view that Jones' prodigious speed and talent hid for years what was an untreatable malady: a soft chin.

"When his gifts were young and sharp, you didn't know the chin was suspect. Some guys are so talented you don't know it because they hardly ever get hit on it," he said. "Look at the Klitschko brothers. Do you know how talented you have to be to be heavyweight champ with a suspect chin? That's how talented those guys are."

This is difficult to dispute. One-punch kayo losses to Antonio Tarver, Glen Johnson, and now Green, none of them murderous punchers, is evidence that Jones always was fragile, though he continues to insist that his precipitous decline was the result of the weight loss he says weakened him after he beat John Ruiz for a heavyweight alphabet belt in 2003. In any event, following Richardson's logic, it makes what he accomplished all the more impressive.

"I always thought that Roy had what I called an improvised, brilliant amateur style," HBO's Larry Merchant, who covered virtually all of Jones' big fights, told THE RING. "(It was) an improvised style based on his athleticism and his intelligence in the ring—knowing how to use his extraordinary athletic gifts to dominate opponents. Even though he fought in a cautious kind of way, when he was at his best in the middleweight division, he was a sensational athlete who, when you watched him, you thought you were seeing things you had never seen before or rarely had seen before," Merchant said.

Merchant draws comparisons to greats from another sport when speaking of how Jones and Hopkins are alike and how they are different.

"One way I have of comparing them is Sandy Koufax and Don Sutton," he said. "Sandy Koufax was a brilliant pitcher for about a decade: three 20-plus win seasons, the kind of pitcher you thought you might see throw a no-hitter every time he was out. He was a dominant force.

"Don Sutton won almost twice as many games as (Koufax) did. He's also in the Hall of Fame, by the way. But I think he won 20 games once, maybe 18 or 19

Boxing Sizzles Down Under

Once seen as the "Superman" of boxing, Roy Jones was a mere mortal when he was bombed out in less than one round by Danny Green in Sydney on December 2. But more importantly, the hosting of fights in countries outside the USA continues to sizzle.

As THE RING has previously recognized, the global financial crisis and the end of big money on offer in Las Vegas for marginal fights has seen boxing return to its tribal roots. If the Green-Jones bout had been held in the USA, it would have hardly raised a ripple worldwide in prefight promotion.

The boxers milked every last cent from ticket sales, pay-per-view and international rights. Notoriously uncooperative with the media during his prime, Jones could not have been more accommodating during this promotion. There were press conferences, open training sessions, and even a media fishing expedition on Sydney Harbor. Wearing a constant beaming smile, the man with the stellar record was treated like royalty by the media and fans wherever he went.

While the fight was promoted as the biggest boxing match in Australian history, there are two others that stand out. Historically, Jack Johnson's 14-round TKO of Tommy Burns to win the undisputed heavyweight championship in Sydney on December 26, 1908, is a clear number one. The Azumah Nelson-Jeff Fenech rematch in Melbourne in March 1992 is a close second.

Over 2,000 people were at Star City casino on a Tuesday afternoon specifically for the official Green-Jones weigh-in. The next night, more than 15,000 people crammed into the Acer Arena, located next door to the 2000 Olympic Stadium. Hundreds of thousands more attended approximately 2,000 pubs and clubs that paid $2,500 each to show the fight. While celebrities were crowded at ringside, some notables were missing due to the absence of complimentary tickets. That and the media section being situated 20 rows back were the end result of Jones being guaranteed a minimum payday of $4-million.

At 10:00 pm, the American made his way to the ring and was applauded with respect, like a visiting head of state. In contrast, when Green's signature song, "Land Downunder" by Men At Work, erupted around the arena, fans dressed en-masse in their green t-shirts passionately sang along in unison. The feeling was exhilarating and those present would not have wanted to be anywhere else in the world at that moment in time.

The following morning, the *Daily Telegrapher* newspaper, Australia's largest, featured Green's win on the front and back pages. It was *the* talking point the next day across the country and the result flashed around the world. There may have only been 122 seconds of official action, but it will be remembered as a valuable part of boxing history.

—Paul Upham

Green warms up for a public sparring session

PHOTO BY CAMERON SPENCER/GETTY IMAGES

one or two other times. That, to me, is Bernard Hopkins. They're both great in their own way."

Only one of them remains great. Green, 28-3 (25), removed any greatness Jones, 54-6 (40), might have had left when he walked him to a corner and landed a thudding right that seemed to catch Jones high on the head, about where Johnson landed when he anesthetized Jones in 2004.

Jones, 179¼, flopped unceremoniously to the canvas, legs flailing. That he rose was rather a surprise given his history of punch-induced narcolepsy, but he could do nothing but cover up as Green, also 179¼, Perth, Australia, hammered him, albeit mostly ineffectually, until referee John Foster stopped it at 2:02 of the round.

Jones, Pensacola, Florida, greeted the stoppage without complaint and, save for a brief statement crediting the winner, at this writing has not been heard from since.

It was a result Richardson said he predicted, though not in the first round.

"As soon as I heard about that fight, I told Bernard the only guy he has to think about is Ornelas because the Jones fight wasn't going to happen. I told him Green was going to knock Roy Jones out. I said he's not quite as talented, but

PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Even though the Jones rematch is no longer viable, Hopkins has plenty of options. Two are light heavyweight titleholder Chad Dawson (left) and cruiserweight champion Tomasz Adamek.

he puts me in the mind of Glen Johnson. And for that reason I didn't see a Roy Jones fight. I saw Danny Green knocking Roy out. Maybe not in the first round," he said.

Hopkins, 50-5-1 (32), had no such worries over Ornelas, 29-6 (19). After a slow start, during which Ornelas seemed to connect with an inordinately high number of looping right hands, Hopkins, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, took over with counterpunches and crisp uppercuts and straight rights.

Ornelas, La Habra, California, took Hopkins' punches fairly resolutely and didn't appear in any danger until the final round when Hopkins, 175, opened up and pummeled him, closing the show just as he had against Kelly Pavlik.

To his credit, Ornelas, 173½, withstood the barrage and remained awake to hear the scores of judges Robert Grasso, Steve Weisfeld, and Raul Caiz Jr., all of whom scored it for Hopkins by tallies of 118-110, 119-109, and 120-109, respectively.

Hopkins' first performance since his historic upset of Pavlik in October 2008 received mixed reviews. Many saw the classic signs we associate with an aged fighter—the inability to take advantage of openings, judicious activity, slowed reflexes, and a greater reliance on tricks than athleticism. It also seemed that as the rounds went by the rust accumulated during the last year dissipated. Richardson didn't see any of that.

"I was impressed," he said. "When you're dealing with any athlete, not just an older athlete, who's been sitting around for a year and has to start that engine up again, you expect some rust. You expect timing to be off and things of that nature.

"What people thought they were seeing as rust coming off (as the fight went on) was actually that Bernard made an assessment of himself as the rounds went on. It's not like he was punching and missing; he just wasn't punching. He just went out and surveyed the land first before he decided to strike. He just decided to start trusting his eyes and firing the shots."

One might question Richardson's objectivity, but he remains impressed enough with his charge that he says he feels badly now for having suggested retirement to Hopkins both after the Tarver and Pavlik wins.

"When I see what he can do in the gym, now I feel disrespectful for telling him to retire. Anyone who can do something as good as he can should keep doing it. I told him he can't fight a whole new generation—he can't just go fight everybody. But there are quite a few guys out there you all call champions that he can still beat."

The new generation to which Richardson refers probably consists of Dawson, and maybe super middleweight beltholder Lucian Bute. Other fighters mentioned as possible future opponents include cruiserweight world champion Tomasz Adamek, with whom talks fell apart just prior to Adamek meeting and beating Andrew Golota, and, if you can stand it, Felix Trinidad. Maybe the most interesting is heavyweight beltholder David Haye.

Whoever it turns out to be, it will be Hopkins who makes the decision. But it won't be Jones, who just isn't viable any longer, regardless of how badly Hopkins wants to avenge his loss. And he should let it go. He was and remains every bit as unique as Jones was—just in a different way.

"Bernard Hopkins is a different animal," Merchant said. "He was what I would call, early in his career, when he was learning the game, a kind of mauler and brawler, very tough, and he endured by having a something that is also very rare—being so dedicated and committed, in terms of his training and his ability to survive the politics of the game because he didn't capture your attention with his style early on, and didn't come out of the Olympics the way Roy did.

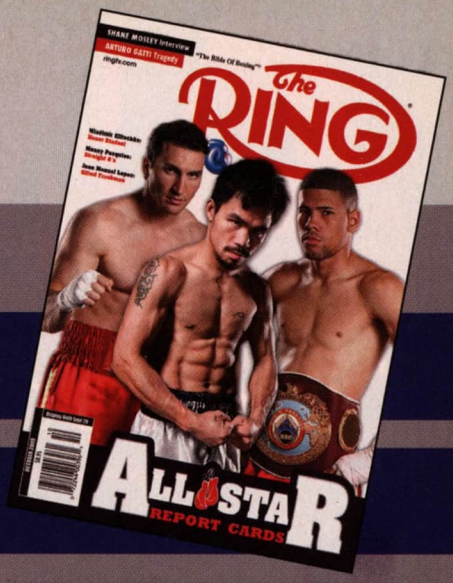
"He had to find his way by simply beating everybody they put in front of him and beating the system that wasn't inclined to embrace him."

Merchant likens Hopkins' late-career transformation from puncher to counterpuncher/mad scientist/whatever the hell he is, to that undergone by another of the sport's stars.

"Also, in a way like Manny Pacquiao, he was so determined to do well that he evolved as a fighter and became a better fundamental craftsman than Roy was. Hopkins was able to use that as he got older to extend his career. And being smart about who he fought and when he fought them and so on."

Whatever Hopkins does, it should be assumed—and hoped—that Jones will be watching it not as an interested and invested ringside observer, but from his couch, a retired star, getting fat and, if not happy, then content enough with what he accomplished when he was a young man. He may not be ready yet for civilian life, but it is ready for him. Indeed, it is calling him. It is not yet calling for Hopkins. If it is, he's not answering. ■

The RING



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ANDRE

"He Won't Be A Superstar;

By Don Stewart

Not even two weeks had passed since his breakout beating of Mikkel Kessler. He hadn't received the WBA super middleweight belt earned with his thorough domination of the man who'd been perceived by most as the top 168-pounder in the world. He wasn't even sure whom he was fighting next.

Still, Andre Ward was already plotting the next leg of his journey, already preparing himself for the work ahead. "I'm on a mission," he said in early-December. "I want to be the undefeated, undisputed super middleweight champion of the world. The goal is to retire undefeated. That's my goal."

The 2004 Olympic gold medalist has plenty of incentive to stay focused. Legacies in boxing are built on timing as much as talent, and there is no shortage of tales about the pretty good fighter who never had the right opponents to become a great one. In Ward's case, he couldn't have picked a better moment to blossom as a pro if he'd hired Edgar Cayce and Miss Cleo as co-advisors.

Ward finds himself in one of the hottest divisions in the sport. His upset of Kessler capped the first stage of Showtime's "Super Six World Boxing Classic," the modified round-robin tournament pitting six of the world's top super middles against each other. A week later, non-entrant Lucian Bute vaulted into THE RING's top spot with an electrifying stoppage of contender Librado Andrade, giving the deep division another rising star, and Ward another target. "I have five to seven years to really make my mark," Ward said. "I feel this is my time."

A clear path to stardom lies at Ward's feet. But can the talented 25-year-old capitalize by winning the Super Six?

WARD

He'll Just Beat Superstars."

Ward surprised a lot of people with his dominant victory over "Super Six" tournament co-favorite Mikkel Kessler. Although he was carefully matched during the start of his pro career, Ward appears to be coming into his own at exactly the right time.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

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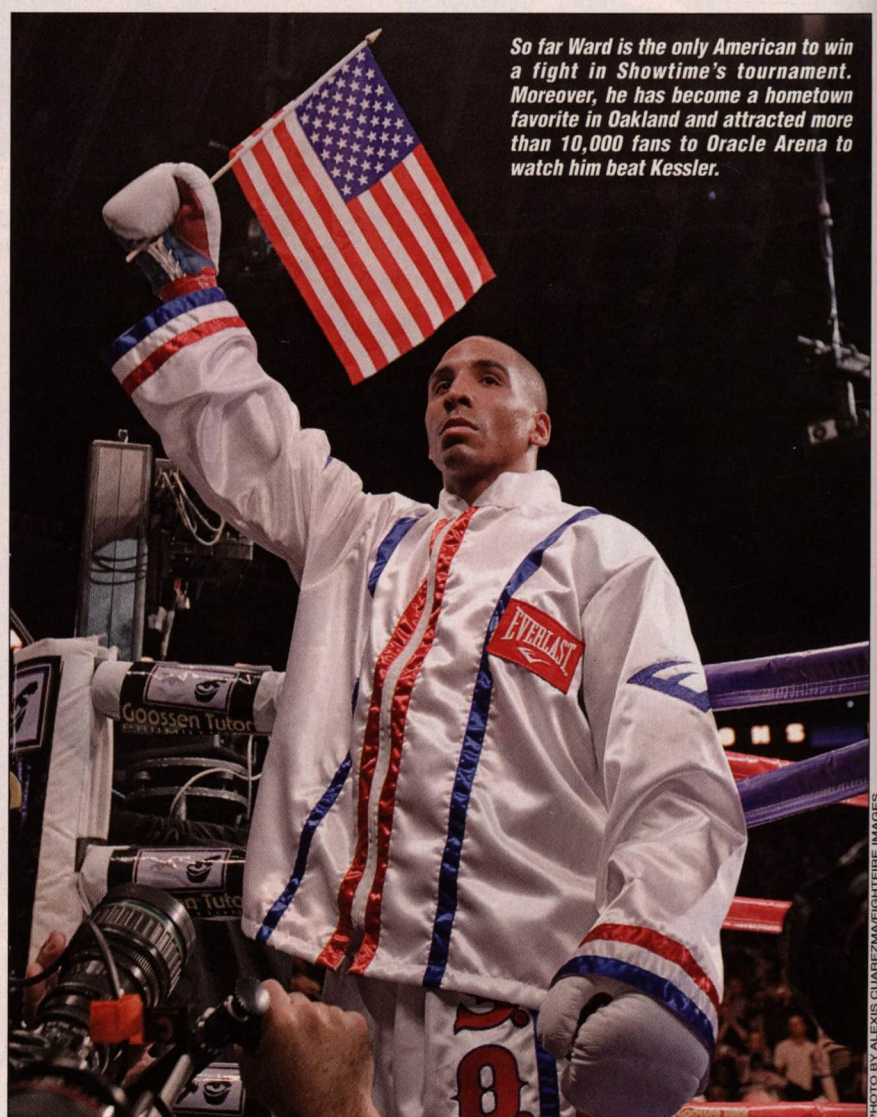
Considering that Vegas oddsmaker Danny Sheridan had tabbed Kessler as the tournament co-favorite, along with Arthur Abraham, a case could be made for shifting the top dog label to Ward, given the way he dominated the "Viking Warrior." Allowed to develop at his own pace as a pro, Ward is stepping up at the right time. The Oakland, California, native also has an interesting path to the semifinals, given that he's scheduled to face first-round losers in the next two stages, and that he won't have to go overseas in either fight.

Not everyone is ready to crown Ward, however. "I don't know about the favorite," Showtime analyst Al Bernstein said. "Abraham was the co-favorite with Kessler, so I don't know if that has changed. I'm not the handicapper for the tournament, but Abraham is still the favorite in my opinion. Abraham hasn't done anything to show that he's anything else than the co-favorite. But there's no doubt that Andre Ward shook up the tournament."

At the very least Ward put himself in excellent position to reach the semifinal round. Next up is a bout in March with Jermain Taylor, assuming Taylor elects to stay in the tournament following his brutal knockout loss to Abraham. Ward is then scheduled for a bout with Andre Dirrell, who lost a split decision to Carl Froch in the first stage. Ward figures to be the heavy favorite in both matchups.

By the time the final is contested in the spring of 2011 (if everything goes to plan, which rarely happens), Ward could have faced and beaten five of the world's top 168-pounders within a span of 18 months.

"You'll have five fights in a two-year period," Bernstein said. "You've now



So far Ward is the only American to win a fight in Showtime's tournament. Moreover, he has become a hometown favorite in Oakland and attracted more than 10,000 fans to Oracle Arena to watch him beat Kessler.

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTFIRE IMAGES

Ward rocks Kessler with a left en route to a technical-decision victory. Ward's trainer, Virgil Hunter, was very pleased with his pupil's win and gave him a B+ grade for his performance.

PHOTO BY LUARA DE LA TORRE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

fought five fights involving the best super middleweights in the world, so you should be a star. If (Ward) gets to the finals, he's a star."

Ward looked like a star in the making on November 21 against Kessler, the most decorated of the Super Six entrants in more ways than one. Much to the thrill of most of the 10,277 fans on hand at the Oracle Arena in Oakland, Ward tattooed the heavily tattooed three-time super middleweight beltholder throughout the fight with jabs and straight power shots thrown from several angles.

Ward, 21-0 (13), began switching back and forth from orthodox to southpaw in the opening round. He used his superior hand speed and footwork to consistently tag the forward-moving Kessler and then slip out of danger.

Moving in and out at will, Ward pounded Kessler's body and tied up frequently his more experienced opponent on the inside. He twice rocked Kessler, 42-2 (32), with right hands in the fourth round. Unable to establish any rhythm, Kessler was looking baffled by the end of the fourth, when he returned to the corner with a cut under his right eye, the result of a Ward headbutt ruled to be unintentional by California ref Jack Reiss.

Ward began taking more chances on the outside in the fifth, when Kessler caught him with a left hook midway through the round. It was the Dane's best shot of the night, though it did little damage. Ward stayed on the attack, though. Given Kessler's power and Ward's willingness to take chances, it added some excitement to what was increasingly becoming a one-sided affair.

"I don't know if it's that risky," Bernstein said of the crowd-pleasing style Ward showed against Kessler. "He moves around a lot. He gives you some looks. He did take some risks in the middle of the fight that Kessler couldn't take advantage of. To me, he's like a veteran pitcher who varies his speed well, then can come back with a junk ball to get you off the plate."

Cut above his left eye and bleeding from the nose, Kessler was asked by his corner if he wanted to continue at the end of the eighth. Kessler suffered a bad cut above his right eye in the 10th, courtesy of another Ward headbutt. Ward seemed on the verge of a knockout in the 11th, when the cut over the right eye prompted Reiss to summon the ringside doctor, who stopped it.

The fight went to the cards early, with Ward getting the clear nod from all three judges. California's Steve Morrow and South Africa's Stanley Christodoulou had it 98-92, while Sweden's Mikael Hook had it 97-93, with all three giving Kessler the ninth round. THE RING scored it a shutout, 100-90, for Ward, the lone American to get a first-round tournament win.

In the ring with Showtime's Jim Gray afterward, a battered Kessler complained of Ward's holding and butting. "Every time I tried to break a clinch, (Reiss) let him punch me. I'm not used to that. It causes you to get out of rhythm. I think that it was unfair, with the headbutting and the holding, and a hometown referee," said Kessler, who fought for the second time in the United States, and for just the fifth time outside of his native Denmark.

It might have sounded like sour grapes, but Kessler had a point, at least with the headbutts. Still, even if Ward had lost two points for butting, and one for holding, the math still adds up in his favor, barring an unwarranted disqualification.

"I think it was justified that he complained; I don't think that's the reason he lost," Bernstein said of Kessler, who never made adjustments and was reluctant to double up his jab. Kessler is rumored to

be bringing in a new corner crew for his second-round fight, with Froch.

"I really don't think that was my best performance," Ward said. "I think I made a lot of mistakes. I feel I was sharper in the (Edison) Miranda fight (in May). But it's nice to know that I beat a guy like Mikkel Kessler, and I still have room to improve."

Throughout camp for the Kessler showdown, trainer Virgil Hunter told Ward that Kessler would be one of his easiest wins to date. He felt Ward would stop Kessler late, as long as Ward kept to the fight plan and didn't necessarily aim for the kayo.

"We expected to (dominate Kessler), we intended to do that, and we knew that we could," said Hunter, a father figure to Ward since the fighter's father died of a heart attack in 2002. "To see it unfold, I gave him a B+. There are some things we can work on to take it to another level. But him being young and being in a situation of that magnitude for the first time, I thought he handled it very well, and the game plan that we had, I thought he executed it to a T.

"We feel we're halfway through the journey. When he retires undefeated, that will complete the journey."

Kessler was just the second top-10 opponent Ward has faced, with Miranda being the other. Hunter feels his fighter has only reached 60 percent of his full potential, but that he'll continue to emerge with more high-level bouts. Plenty of those lie ahead.

As this issue went to press, Taylor hadn't announced whether or not he'd stay in the tournament. Assuming he goes ahead and fights Ward, the matchup is favorable for Ward, given that Taylor's erect style is somewhat European in the Kessler mold. Taylor has also dropped four of his last five fights, including three by knockout. The most mentioned sub is contender Allan Green, who looked bland in outpointing southpaw Tarvis Simms in October. Ward would certainly bring more speed and variables to the table than Simms.

With his fast hands and unorthodox style, Dirrell is the wild card of the tournament. And by the time he gets to Ward, the elusive southpaw will have faced Abraham. If Dirrell loses to Abraham, Ward could find himself facing a desperate opponent. It's a dangerous matchup for Ward.

The other two Super Six participants present their own problems for Ward. The crude-but-tough Froch brings a strong chin, power, heart and possibly more versatility than Kessler. Meanwhile, Abraham continues to be an unsolved mystery for his opponents.

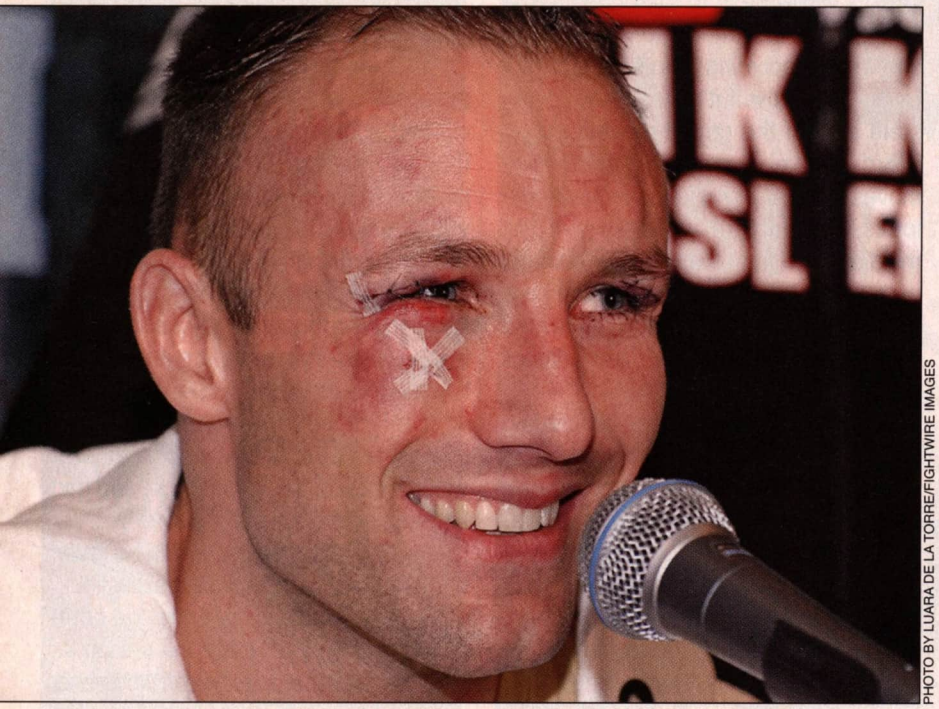


PHOTO BY LUARA DE LA TORRE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Although a patched-up Kessler was smiling at the postfight press conference, he was far from happy about the cuts he suffered, which were the result of Ward's headbutts.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTCHALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Arthur Abraham celebrates his knockout of Jermain Taylor, who is still lying on the canvas. Taylor said he intends to fight on and will stay int he tournament, with Ward as his next opponent. However, a match with Abraham would be much more challenging for Ward.

"I just think Arthur Abraham is the guy," Bernstein said. "Someone has to show me they can figure out a way to land punches against him, not get hit when he comes out of that defensive shell, and not get hurt by him. There were times in the Kessler fight where Andre Ward did some things that Arthur Abraham would have taken advantage of. But Andre Ward is still a work in progress."

Bernstein isn't the only observer who doesn't rank Ward first in the division.

Ward shot from number nine to number one in THE RING super middleweight ratings after beating Kessler, but a week later, Bute jumped into the top spot following his stoppage of Andrade.

Ward respectfully disagrees with those assessments. "I feel I should be the top super middleweight in the world right now," said Ward, who hasn't lost a fight since 1998. "But it's just one more reason to stay motivated."

There's a sentiment from the Ward camp that the fighter isn't getting the respect that he deserves. When asked if he felt Ward could be a superstar, Hunter repeated a comment he made back in 2005: "He won't be a superstar; he'll just beat superstars."

In regard to his potential superstardom, Ward, who often talks about his faith, says he "wears that stuff like a loose garment." He seems to want recognition, but it's not what fuels his discipline and motivates him to stay in shape between fights. Like Fast Eddie Felson at the end of *The Color of Money*, Ward is simply driven by a desire to compete against the best.

Apart from his 2007 points loss to Joe Calzaghe, the 30-year-old Kessler showed no signs of slowing down prior to meeting Ward. If Ward really is better than he looked against the Dane, he just might be the best guy in this division, after all.

"I do feel like I have an opportunity, based on the competition, to show the world what I have as a fighter," Ward said. "Honestly, if superstardom comes, it comes. I'll embrace it, I'll be thankful for it. But I'm not shooting to be a star. It's not something I'm chasing.

"I just love competition. I just want to be the *best* fighter who ever laced up a pair of gloves in my era. If I fall short, I fall short. But this competition gives me a chance to prove it. That's what motivates me."

An impossible mission? Maybe. But with each win, it seems a bit more plausible for Ward. ■

Don Stewart is a Pennsylvania-based freelance writer and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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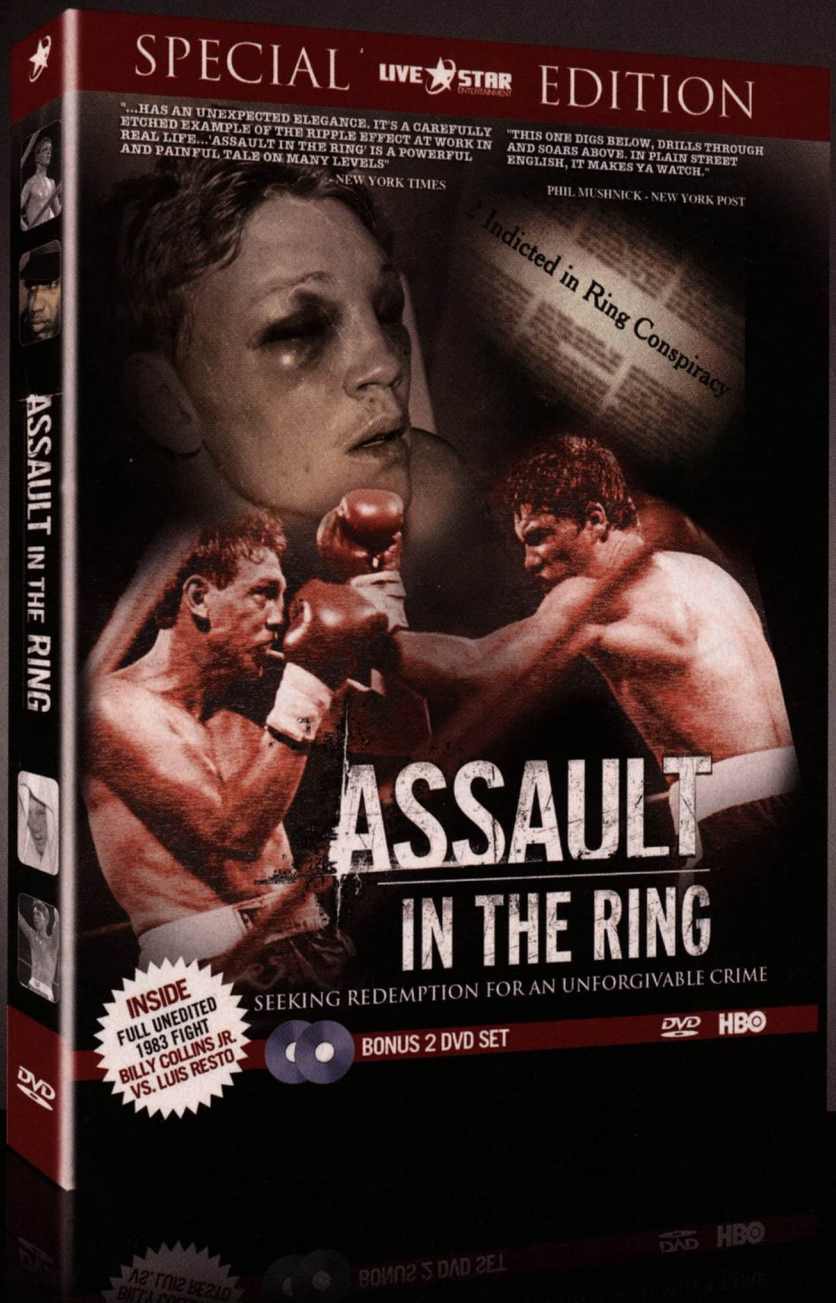

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The Best of 2009

Compiled by Nigel Collins, Joseph Santoliquito, Don Stradley, and Eric Raskin

Where would boxing be without Manny Pacquiao? Certainly not looking toward what could conceivably become the biggest moneymaker in the sport's history. That's for sure.

When heavyweight champion Gene Tunney, THE RING's very first Fighter of the Year, fought Jack Dempsey in 1927, his purse was $990,445.54. Tunney asked Tex Rickard to make the check for $1-million, and gave the promoter a check for the difference of $9,554.46. Apparently, the million-dollar mark was a status symbol that meant a lot to Tunney. Wonder what "The Fighting Marine" would have thought about the approximate $20-million guarantees reportedly going to Pacquiao and future playmate Floyd Mayweather?

If nothing else, the massive amounts of money generated by today's biggest stars provides proof positive that boxing is far from the irrelevant sport its detractors would have you believe. The past year also should have opened a lot of peoples' eyes to the fact that boxing is still (as it has always been) a truly international sport, not just the province of the United States of America.

There was one sellout after another in Germany, peaking with the more than 60,000 who turned out to watch Wladimir Klitschko stop Ruslan Chagaev to capture the vacant RING heavyweight championship in Gelsenkirchen. There were also large capacity crowds in Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and Poland. Moreover, thanks to Pacquiao's unprecedented success, the Philippines remain a boxing hotbed, as does Thailand, Japan, and Mexico.

There were also significant signs of health in the U.S., and we're not just talking about Las Vegas extravaganzas featuring Mayweather or Pacquiao. The Shane Mosley-Antonio Margarito fight drew a crowd of 20,820, the largest Staples Center attendance for *any* event ever held at the venue.

But for the fans, boxing has never been about the money. It's been about what takes place between the ropes, and there was plenty to brag about in 2009. From Pacquiao's one-punch obliteration of Ricky Hatton to the masterful boxing lesson Andre Ward gave favored Mikkel Kessler, boxing showed yet again in 2009 why it has endured and why it will continue to do so.

But don't take our word for it. The proof is contained on the next 20 pages.

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

MANNY PACQUIAO

If everyone approached their job the way Manny Pacquiao approaches his, we'd all be better off.

Think about it. Imagine if every doctor, lawyer, teacher, cop, and bus driver was as good at their gig as Pacquiao is in the ring. The world might not be in the current slump that it's in. And if every fighter had Pacquiao's dedication and unbridled panache, there'd be much more excitement around the fight game than just the two or three times per year when Pacquiao gloves up.

Pacquiao has earned THE RING's Fighter of the Year honors for the third time, having won previously in 2006 and 2008. Only a handful of fighters have won the top honors three or more times since Gene Tunney first won the award in 1928. They are Muhammad Ali (5), Joe Louis (4), Rocky Marciano (3), Joe Frazier (3), and Evander Holyfield (3). Only Ali, Louis, and Marciano matched Pacquiao's feat of winning the laurels thrice within a four-year period. Pacquiao is in some rarefied air, indeed. He's walking with the greats.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

It's tough to recall the last time we were witness to a genuinely great fighter. Greatness can be subjective—some fans may refer to anyone who can double up on a jab as great, while others reserve the accolade for fighters who are already tucked away in the dusty archives of boxing history. Pacquiao, though, deserves to be called "great."

In recent decades we've had fighters who were great attractions, such as Oscar De La Hoya; we've seen fighters who were great athletes, such as Roy Jones; we've seen fighters with great skills: Bernard Hopkins and Floyd Mayweather. And we've seen fighters participate in great fights: Marco Antonio Barrera and Arturo Gatti. Meanwhile, Pacquiao takes all of these types of greatness and combines them into one smiling, exuberant package. He's an attraction, with athletic ability and uncanny skills. Plus, his fights are consistently entertaining. It's rare that a fighter has all of that going for him.

He's great in the sense that Henry Armstrong and Roberto Duran were great. Armstrong, incidentally, won Fighter of the Year laurels once; Duran never won it. If we were to hold a dinner party, and fighters from every era could be there, Pacquiao could sit at the same table as Duran and Armstrong. That is, if Pacquiao wanted to sit at all. He'd probably jump on stage, grab a microphone, and start singing.

Honorable Mention

Shane Mosley silenced the naysayers who'd criticized his recent performances by annihilating Antonio Margarito in January. The 38-year-old Mosley fought with the speed and enthusiasm of a young man, scoring a stoppage in the ninth round. He may have been too impressive, since he spent the rest of the year begging for fights.

Paul Williams didn't get his long-awaited shot at middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik, but had two chances to showcase his skills in 2009. The first came in April, when he won nearly every round against Winky Wright. In December, Williams was taken to the limit by the very game and talented Sergio Martinez, but managed to win a majority decision. Williams may not be as devastating as his publicity would have us believe, but in 2009 he showed himself to be a fun, competitive fighter.

We may remember 2009 as the year **Andre Ward** finally crashed the big time. The former Olympian capped off his fine year by beating the highly regarded Mikkel Kessler rather handily, earning a technical decision when the bout was stopped in the 11th because of a cut over Kessler's eye. The win, which was Ward's opening bout of the Showtime "Super Six" tournament, earned him the WBA 168-pound title. Prior to that, his year was marked by beating Shelby Pudwill via third-round kayo and scoring decision wins over Edison Miranda and Henry Buchanan.

Lucian Bute, super middleweight titlist, scored an impressive knockout of Fulgencio Zuniga in March, but that didn't prepare us for his blistering performance against Librado Andrade later in the year. The fourth-round kayo of the durable Andrade erased the controversy of their first meeting, when Bute was nearly kayoed in the final round but hung on to win on points. This time Bute left no doubts.

Young fighters shined in 2009: **Chad Dawson** was dominant in rematches against the old guard of Antonio Tarver and Glen Johnson, while WBA bantamweight titleholder **Anselmo Moreno** of Panama went undefeated in four bouts, beating Wladimir Sidorenko, Mahyar Monshipour, Jorge Otero, and Frederic Patrac. England's **Amir Khan** quietly went about having a great year, defeating Marco Antonio Barrera, Andriy Kotelnik (for the WBA 140-pound belt), and Dmitriy Salita. **Timothy Bradley** remained unbeaten, defeating Kendall Holt, engaging in a no-contest against Nate Campbell, and beating Lamont Peterson via 12-round decision in a well-fought, fast-paced contest.

Heavyweight titlist **Vitali Klitschko**, who was "retired" for four years prior to winning the WBC belt in 2008, seemed intent on making up for lost time in 2009. He defended his title three times, opposite Juan Carlos Gomez, Chris Arreola, and Kevin Johnson, all failing against Dr. Ironfist.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Mosley: Forever young

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao poses next to his **Time** *magazine cover*

It's not just the two-round blowout of Ricky Hatton or the hatchet job done on Miguel Cotto that has us so enamored of Pacquiao. It's not just the three RING belts that he's won, or the numerous alphabet belts, or that he occupies the top spot on the pound-for-pound list. It's not just the massive paydays he's earned, or the rumor that Sly Stallone wants Pacquiao to co-star in a movie with him (which, with all due respect to the wrestlers on *Monday Night Raw*, would be far cooler than anything Mayweather has done to "crossover."). It's that Manny Pacquiao aims to please. There are many fighters we appreciate, but very few who delight us. Pacquiao delights us.

Ironically, we probably would've loved Pacquiao even if he'd remained the off-balance, wild-swinging southpaw who unseated Barrera many years ago. That he's evolved into one of the most complete punching machines in the game has been an unexpected bonus. But volumes have already been written

on Pacquiao's maturity as a fighter. Another aspect of Pacquiao is his flair for drama, which was in full bloom at last summer's Boxing Writers Association of America dinner in New York.

After a week's worth of rumors that he might not be there to receive the Edward J. Neil Award in person, Pacquiao not only showed up, he rocked the house. No, he didn't sing, but he arrived with a camp member who walked to the podium before him, waving some kind of ceremonial fetish over his head, perhaps to clear the air of evil spirits. Then Pacquiao made an impassioned speech about how winning the BWAA

Manny Pacquiao: The Year That Was

It doesn't seem possible, but Pacquiao actually outdid himself in 2009. In 2008, he jumped from junior lightweight, to lightweight, to welterweight, earning comparisons to the exalted fighters of yesteryear. This year he fought as a junior welterweight and at welter, and proved he is deserving of the accolades.

Along with his boxing success, his profile seemed to grow larger. His name appeared frequently on Google and Yahoo lists of "most-searched-subjects." One week he was right up there with Lady Gaga and Tiger Woods. He appeared in mainstream magazines, such as Time, Forbes Magazine, *and* Sports Illustrated. *He achieved all of this coverage without benefit of a scandal, or silly publicity stunts. He did it the way boxers used to do it—by fighting.*

Pacquiao engaged in not one, but two superfights, the sort of widely hyped events that get the turnstiles spinning in Las Vegas. The two bouts were pay-per-view hits, combining for approximately 2 million buys. In Cotto and Hatton, Pacquiao defeated two revered, international icons who may be Hall of Famers in the future. Some might argue that Hatton and Cotto were a bit past their primes, having suffered knockout losses in the not too distant past. Perhaps this is true, but could anyone else have blown them away in the manner that Pacquiao did? We don't think so. That makes Pacquiao's year all the more impressive.

Pac-Man sends Hatton sprawling

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

award was one of the proudest moments of his career. It was pure showbiz. He's humble, but he knows how to work a room.

Addressing an audience of writers and media types, Pacquiao said in his vastly improved English, "I promise in the future to be a more exciting Manny Pacquiao, fighting harder for every minute of every round."

It was cornball, but he probably meant every word.

Could Pacquiao actually become more exciting? We can't imagine it. Then again, we should never doubt the guy. ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Cotto couldn't deal with Pacquiao's speed and power

KO 2 Ricky Hatton, Las Vegas, Nevada, May 2, 2009: A sell-out crowd of 16,262 settled in at the MGM Grand expecting to see Hatton give Pacquiao a battle. They instead saw Pacquiao drop Hatton twice in the opening stanza, once with a right hook, and then, in the closing seconds of the round, with a straight left that sent Hatton tottering across the ring and onto his back. Hatton survived the round, but had the same look that many fighters have had after experiencing Pacquiao's whirlwind attack—a mixture of confusion and disbelief.

To Hatton's credit, he roared out for round two with some aggression of his own. But as he tried to bully Pacquiao into the ropes, he found the Filipino was simply too elusive to be cornered. Near the end of round two, Hatton made a clumsy, desperate charge at Pacquiao, but was struck with a perfect, arching left hook that left him flat on the canvas for several seconds. The bout, in which Pac-Man captured THE RING 140-pound championship belt, was over at 2:59 of the round. Those who spent $1,000 for ringside seats may have been disappointed at the bout's brevity, but they were also witness to history: It was perhaps the most dynamic performance of Pacquiao's career.

KO 12 Miguel Cotto, Las Vegas, Nevada, November 14, 2009: The second bout of Pacquiao's stellar year started out fiercely, with Cotto giving as good as he got. But after Cotto was dropped in the third and fourth rounds and staggered in the sixth, he opted for a different approach. Realizing he was outgunned, Cotto began dancing away from Pacquiao, hoping merely to survive until the end. There was no escape, though. Using nimble footwork and blinding speed, Pacquiao was able to herd Cotto into corners and along the ropes long enough to blast him with combinations, leaving the Puerto Rican's face misshapen and bleeding.

By the 10th, Cotto was simply running, trying to avoid Pacquiao's slashing punches. The MGM Grand customers eventually did the unthinkable—they booed Cotto for his reluctance to fight. Pacquiao occasionally looked to referee Kenny Bayless and shrugged, as if to say, "He doesn't want to fight anymore." Bayless finally stepped in and halted the action at 0:54 of the 12th round.

The bout was a successful HBO Pay-Per-View, with an estimated 1.25 million buys. Many, no doubt, tuned in because this was the bout that was supposed to reveal the legitimacy of Pacquiao at welterweight. Cotto, a very fine fighter, was enlisted as a sort of truth machine. The truth turned out to be that Pacquiao was unstoppable this year.

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ-JUAN DIAZ

Juan Manuel Marquez would finally show his age. That was the prevailing feeling entering the lightweight world champion's title defense against Juan Diaz. That the myriad battles the 35-year-old Mexican legend was in would surface against the younger, naturally larger Diaz.

For about five rounds it did.

Diaz was connecting with left hooks and straight rights, forcing Marquez back and making him swell up. Round after round, "The Baby Bull" kept charging forward, his volume of punches putting Marquez constantly on the defensive.

Marquez looks down at the fallen Diaz

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Honorable Mention

It was supposed to be a tune-up. That's all. A fight against an aggressive journeyman, building toward a larger fight. It's part of boxing. It's also a big part of boxing when that "other guy" spoils those plans. **Rogers Mtagwa** did almost that when he faced **Juan Manuel Lopez** at Madison Square Garden in an unexpectly competitive punchout. "Juanma" ruled the early portion of the fight, but barely escaped with his undefeated record as Mtagwa came on strong down the stretch and had Lopez out on his feet in the 12th round.

There was incredible back-and-forth action when **Bernard Dunne** won the WBA junior featherweight strap in a breathtaking fight with **Ricardo Cordoba**. Each fighter got up from knockdowns, though it was Dunne who poured on the pressure late with three knockdowns in the 11th to win.

Andre Berto proved his mettle in the second defense of the WBC welterweight title by overcoming a shaky first round to defeat **Luis Collazo** on points. Berto needed a strong finish, and took the 12th and won by a single point in two judge's scorecards.

Ryan Rhodes took his share of early pounding during a light middleweight clash with **Jamie Moore** in October, before rallying to stop Moore in the seventh.

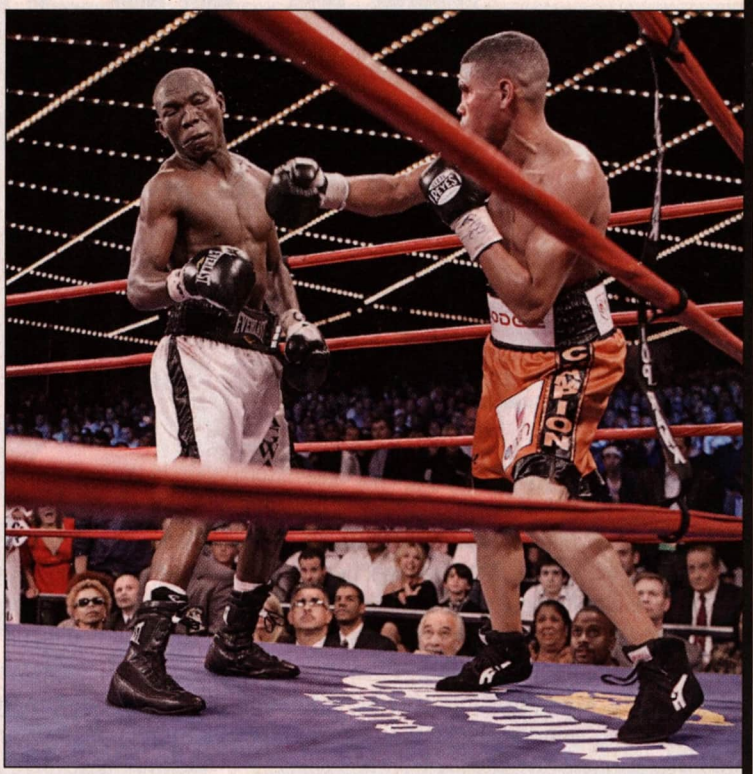


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Lopez stuns Mtagwa with a right

Joseph Agbeko made a critical mistake in the 10th round of turning his head to complain to the ref about a headbutt. That's when **Yonnhy Perez** took advantage and landed a series of shots that forced Agbeko to his knees. It proved to be the difference in an all-action bantamweight fight.

All **Jermain Taylor** had to do was stay away from **Carl Froch** for three more minutes, but he couldn't. The Englishman starched him with a right in the closing seconds of the fight.

Manny Pacquiao survived **Miguel Cotto**'s most vicious assaults in the first four rounds, only to forge ahead and take control of the fight in the sixth on his way to a bloody 12th-round TKO.

Paul Williams and **Sergio Martinez** each took turns on the canvas in the first round. Somehow, Williams came through with a controversial decision that had many shaking their heads at ringside in December.

Francisco Rodriguez got to see the Rocky statue and gave **Teon Kennedy** more than he bargained for in a great back-and-forth junior featherweight battle at Philadelphia's legendary Blue Horizon. Sadly, Rodriguez died two days later from brain injuries suffered in the fight.

But something happened around the fifth, the teetering old man suddenly found new energy, and it didn't come from downing his own urine in between rounds.

It came from the many wars he was in. It came from experience. It came with patience and accurate punches, gradually turning the sway of the fight away from the 25-year-old Diaz and in his own favor. Bleeding from a cut above his right eye from a punch in the fifth, Marquez was the one advancing and pushing Diaz back.

Marquez noticed something that changed the course of the fight: Diaz kept lurching forward after each punch he threw, leaving the middle wide open for a counter attack. It's the opening Marquez needed to slow down Diaz.

Marquez began loading up on right uppercuts, which seemed to catch Diaz right in the face every time he threw it. A Marquez uppercut in the eighth opened a cut over The Baby Bull's right eye.

It marked the beginning of the end for Diaz. His work rate dropping, blood flowing into his eyes, making it tough to see incoming punches, Diaz tried fending off Marquez, but he couldn't.

In the ninth, Marquez unfurled a five-punch flurry, ending with a blistering right to the temple. The blunt force of the punch sent Diaz down and almost out of the ring. But Diaz was aware enough to get back on his feet, though he was noticeably wobbly.

It was the right uppercut that finally did Diaz in, knocking him flat on his back and forcing referee Rafael Ramos to end it at the 2:40 mark of the ninth.

After eight rounds, the fight was even on the official scorecards, with Max DeLuca seeing it 77-75 in favor of Marquez, Duane Ford 77-75 for Diaz, and Levi Martin having it 76-76.

It was a courageous effort by Diaz, but not enough to unseat the champion. ■

ROUND OF THE YEAR

MARCOS MAIDANA-VICTOR ORTIZ, ROUND ONE

Unfairly overshadowed by Victor Ortiz' capitulation in the biggest fight of his young career was the fact that his fight with Marcos Maidana at L.A.'s Staples Center was tremendously exciting. Yes, the local hero lost in a less-than-satisfactory manner, but what went down before his surrender was stirring stuff, and no round typified the bristling two-way action better than the first. .

Originally, Maidana-Ortiz was scheduled to be the co-feature, along with the Chris John-Rocky Juarez rematch. But when John became ill and the Juarez fight was postponed, most of the preflight ballyhoo was focused on junior welterweight Ortiz, who Golden Boy Promotions was attempting to build into a major attraction.

Boxing insiders and hardcore fans knew Maidana was a difficult assignment, but the general feeling was that it was going to be Ortiz' HBO coming out party. Some overly optimistic touts were even calling him the "new Golden Boy," the likely replacement for the recently retired Oscar De La Hoya. Lost in

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Ortiz and Maidana traded knockdowns in the sensational first round

Honorable Mention

Grano gets behind Kauffman in a wild brawl

PHOTO BY DWIGHTMCCANN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Both the second and fourth rounds of the **Manny Pacquiao-Miguel Cotto** fight were not only thrillers, they also represented the shift in fortunes that eventually decided the fight. As in the opening stanza, Cotto continued to land hard punches in the second, but by then Pacquiao was also beginning to score, and both men gave and received numerous blows as the seesaw action intensified. Cotto looked on the way to winning the third when Pac-Man sent him sprawling to the canvas with a right that landed just below the left ear. The Puerto Rican didn't seem hurt and fought back with considerable vigor. But after a good start to the fourth, Cotto was dropped again, this time with a crunching left uppercut to the chin that stunned him badly. Again he beat the count, but the momentum had swayed in Pac-Man's direction and never really swung back Cotto's way.

The lightweight world championship fight between defending champ **Juan Manuel Marquez** and challenger **Juan Diaz** provided the best overall action of the year, but the first and the eighth rounds were particularly fierce. So was the fifth round of the aforementioned **Maidana-Ortiz** slugfest and fifth round of the first **Jean Pascal-Adrian Diaconu** light heavyweight sizzler.

While the first 11 rounds consisted of featherweight titleholder **Chris John** giving **Rocky Juarez** a boxing lesson, Juarez finally let his hands go in the 12th to rock John, who responded by digging in and firing back, as the final three minutes almost made up for the monotony that preceded it.

It wasn't on a world-class level like all the other rounds in this category, but for unadulterated, hard-hitting fun it was hard to top the fourth round of the **Tony Grano-Travis Kauffman** heavyweight shootout. Kauffman seemed on the verge of a knockout win during the third and the early part of the fourth, as Grano wobbled around the ring on unsteady legs but wouldn't go down. Finally, in a desperate attempt to stay in the fight, he hit Kauffman low and then spit out his mouthpiece to gain additional rest. By the time Kauffman resumed his attack, Grano was refreshed enough to land a solid counter right—and suddenly it was Kauffman who was in trouble. The exhausted Kauffman went down twice, got up twice, but was helpless on the ropes taking heavy punishment when the referee stopped the fight with four seconds to go in the round.

all the hype was the fact that in his previous bout Maidana had lost a split decision to Andreas Kotelnik in Germany and was head and shoulders above anybody Ortiz had faced so far.

Maidana was quietly confident, and when the bell sounded for the opening round, he marched out of his corner and immediately went on the attack, winging looping left hooks as he advanced. Ortiz stood his ground and fired back, forcing his opponent into the ropes. As the Argentinean attempted to punch his way out, southpaw Ortiz landed a right hook that sent Maidana to the floor and the 8,600 fans in attendance went into an uproar.

Maidana beat the count, and when Ortiz moved in for the finish, he ran into a straight right from his adversary that landed flush on the chin and sent him flying backward onto his back.

Even though he jumped up quickly, Ortiz appeared more hurt than Maidana had a few seconds earlier, but seemed to have steadied himself by the end of the round, despite "El Cino's" best efforts to end matters there and then. When the bell rang to end THE RING's 2009 Round of the Year, both men shared in the excited cheers reverberating throughout the arena. The fans had seen something special—and they knew it.

Maidana would survive two more knockdowns to batter Ortiz into a sixth-round TKO victim in a great fight that was perfectly encapsulated in the first three minutes of slam-bam action. ■

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

MANNY PACQUIAO KO 2 RICKY HATTON

Some people try to compare knockouts to homeruns. These folks mean well, but the comparison doesn't hold water. Perhaps a bases loaded, ninth inning, walk-off homer comes close, but still, the pitcher doesn't leave the park with a concussion. Also, homeruns happen all the time, sometimes three or four times in a single game. Clean knockouts come rarely, especially in big fights, and when they do, with a few fluky exceptions throughout boxing history, the vanquished fighter doesn't get a chance to get up and get even. If the thing is done properly, as we saw when Manny Pacquiao kayoed Ricky Hatton in round two of their Las Vegas bout, the finality is both breathtaking and a little scary.

Hatton himself was a bit of a knocker-outer in his better days—he scored a tasty one against Carlos Maussa back in 2005—but he had the misfortune of meeting Pacquiao at a time when Pacquiao seems guided by forces not of this earth. At the very least, Pacquiao has the gnome-like Freddie Roach as his trainer, who picked up on Hatton's peculiar habit of tapping his gloves together before rushing his opponent. That was all Roach needed.

Pacquiao was instructed to watch for Hatton's little quirk, and to swing hard when the Brit commenced tapping. This resulted in Hatton being dumped twice in the opening round. Unaware of how Pacquiao was picking him apart, Hatton came out for the second, still tapping his gloves together, still charging. Late in the second, Pacquiao timed him again. Ducking underneath, just in case Hatton remembered to throw a punch instead of merely running in like a rhino, Pacquiao threw a pretty left hook from the southpaw side. Another of Hatton's peculiar habits is a tendency

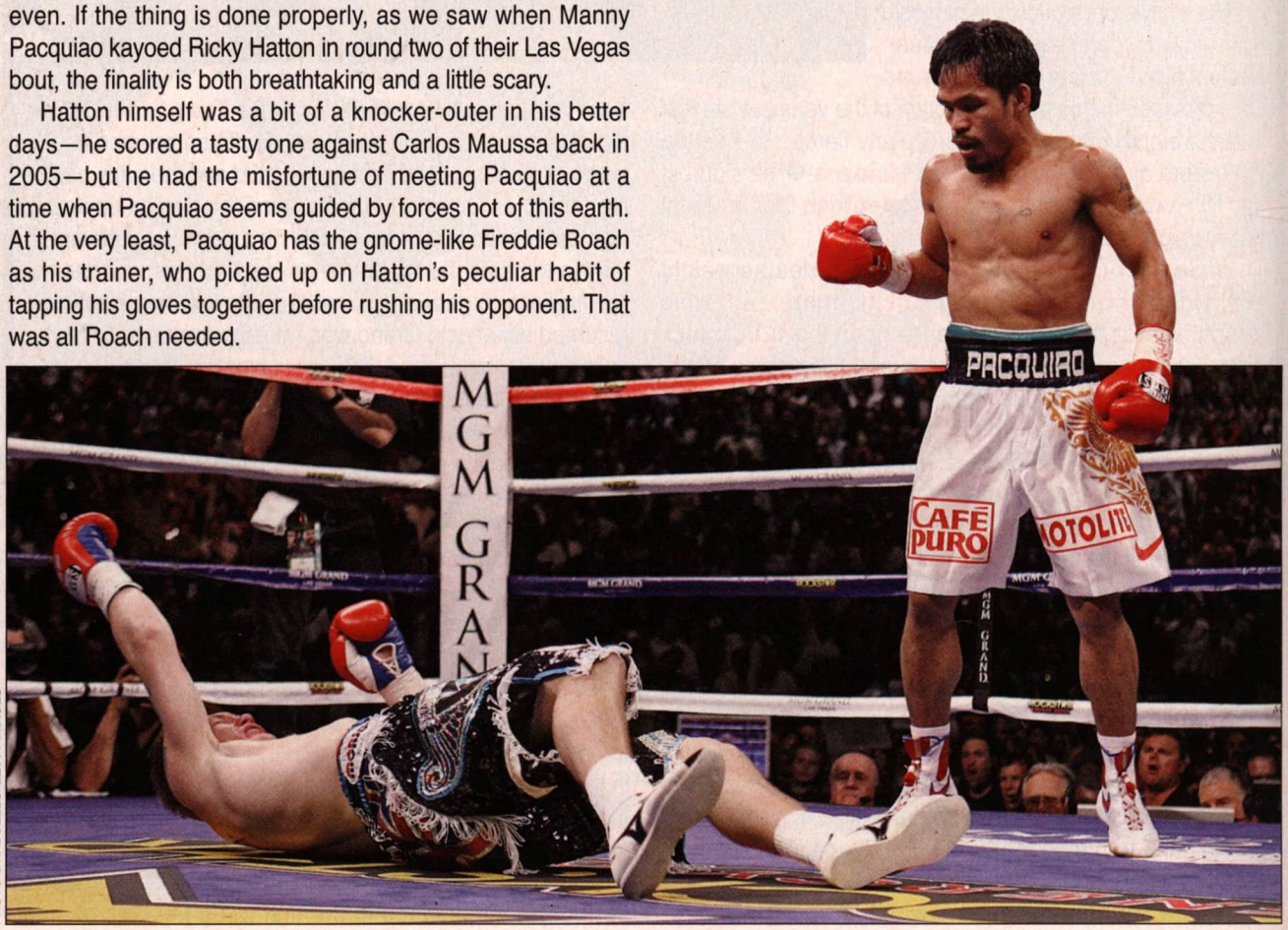


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Pacquiao flattens Hatton

Honorable Mention

If THE RING handed out an award for knockout victim of the year, it would surely go to former middleweight champion **Jermain Taylor**, for he was stiffened twice in 2009, once by **Carl Froch** of England, and once by Germany's **Arthur Abraham**.

It's hard to say which kayo was more dramatic. Froch was behind on points and had to rise from a knockdown himself before he kayoed Taylor at 2:46 of the 12th round. It was an old-fashioned come-from-behind knockout, which is always great to tell the kids about later. As for Abraham, he was cruising to a comfortable points win when he seemed to realize it's an affront to Taylor if you don't knock him out. Rather than risk insulting the fine people of Arkansas, Abraham knocked Taylor cold with a right hand. Taylor lasted a full eight seconds longer against Abraham, as he didn't begin snoring until 2:54 of round 12. Taylor's loved ones should do everything they can to remove his chin from circulation.

Another brutal knockout took place when young **Alfredo Angulo** obliterated a very game **Harry Joe Yorgey**. A massive left hook had Yorgey out on his feet, while referee Johnny Callas couldn't get there in time to stop a follow-up right that put Yorgey on the canvas.

Russian southpaw **Matt Korobov** scored a stunning fourth round kayo of **Cory Jones** on the undercard of the Miguel Cotto-Michael Jennings bout at Madison Square Garden. **Jean Pascal** was also impressive in stopping **Pablo Nievas**, using a counter left hook to end their April bout in Montreal.

Some smart promoter should be working to get **Randall "The Knock-Out King" Bailey** and **Antonio Pitalua** together, for both of these aging junior welterweights can still throw the hard stuff. Bailey, 35, scored one of the best knockouts of the year when he toppled **Francisco Figueroa** at the Pepsi Pavilion in Memphis. Bailey scored the fourth-round stoppage with a perfect right cross that cut through Figueroa's upraised gloves and landed square on the chin. Figueroa had never been kayoed. Meanwhile, 39-year-old Pitalua knocked **Jose Reyes** absolutely flat with a perfect right cross in August. Reyes' feet actually left the ground before he landed on the canvas. Pitalua couldn't have done any better with a baseball bat.

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS KERN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor suffered two devastating knockouts in 2009

to walk into punches. He's gotten away with this in the past, but as he faces better opponents it's becoming a problem.

Hatton went down as if, from somewhere in the cheap seats where his fans had been singing selections from the catalog of Ricky Hatton fight songs, a sniper had picked him off with a deer rifle. He went down stiffly on his side, where he twitched a bit before growing quite still on the canvas. He remained there for a longer time than is comfortable to see a man down. There were moments of genuine concern as his people huddled around him, but the British fans seemed to revive Hatton with their singing.

He rose to his feet, slightly shaken. He didn't seem too distraught, although there was some eventual talk on his part about retiring. Some months later he was seen cavorting with professional wrestlers on American television. He looked fat again.

There's been a growing tendency to re-evaluate Hatton as just an awkward and overrated fighter who had a few years of success. But don't dismiss him too easily—he's a hard night for anyone. That's why the ease and precision of Pacquiao's win was so startling. That's why it was our Knockout of The Year. ■

UPSET OF THE YEAR

JUAN CARLOS SALGADO KO 1 JORGE LINARES

Talented junior lightweight Jorge Linares seemed to have everything going for him: Undefeated in 27 pro bouts, 18 by knockout, already a two-division titleholder at age 24, frequently mentioned as a future pound-for-pound entrant. And on top of all that, he had just signed a contract with Golden Boy Promotions and was positioned to become one of their stars.

On the other hand, Mexican Juan Carlos Salgado was relatively unknown outside of his native Mexico, despite a 20-0-1 (15) record and a handful of minor fights in the United States. Moreover, you can be sure Teiken Promotions didn't import him to bump off Linares, who had turned pro in Japan and fought there 18 times previously.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY

Unheralded Salgado attacks Linares

Honorable Mention

Even though Vic Darchinyan had broken **Christian Mijares**' lengthy winning streak earlier in the year, the highly touted Mexican was expected to bounce back against Venezuela's **Nehomar Cermeno**. But the 15-fight novice surprised by winning a 12-round split decision, and then confirmed his superiority by beating Mijares again, the second time via unanimous decision.

Denmark's **Mikkel Kessler** entered Showtime's "Super Six" tournament as the co-favorite, only to be upset by **Andre Ward**, who dominated the "Viking Warrior" before the bout was stopped in the 11th round, due to a butt-inflicted cut, and awarded to the American via technical decision. Now, Ward is a co-favorite, along with Arthur Abraham, to win the tourney.

Yet another fighter from Venezuela tallied an upset when lightweight **Miguel Acosta** knocked out previously unbeaten and highly favored **Urbano Antillon** in Nuevo Vallarata, Mexico. It was a close fight until the ninth round when Acosta drilled the lunging Antillon with a vicious right uppercut that sent the Mexican to the canvas. Antillon got back to his feet at the count of nine but was in no condition to continue.

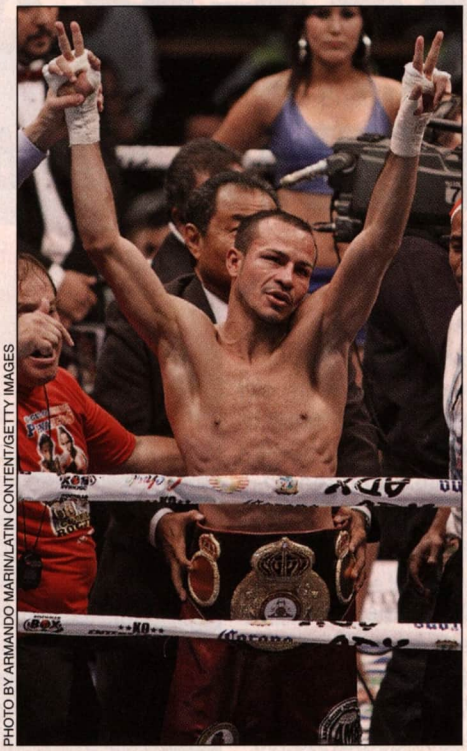


PHOTO BY ARMANDO MARIN/LATIN CONTENT/GETTY IMAGES

Cermeno following his upset of Mijares

Most discerning fans knew that undefeated middleweight **John Duddy** was a better ticket seller than a fighter and that he would most likely lose the first time he faced a genuine world-class opponent. But the popular Irishman never reached that level. He was beaten over 10 rounds by club fighter **Billy Lyell**, who came in at 18-7 (2) and a loser of three of his six most-recent bouts.

Over the past few decades, American heavyweights who ventured to Europe have not faired well, including Philadelphia's **Eddie Chambers**, who had lost a competitive decision to Alexander Povetkin in Berlin in 2008. But following four comeback victories, "Fast Eddie" returned to Germany to face undefeated **Alexander Dimitrenko** in July '09 and won a majority decision over the local favorite. Even more importantly, the victory put Chambers in line for a shot at world champion Wladimir Klitschko in early-2010.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY

Salgado celebrates his upset victory

But regardless of their relative stature going into the WBA super featherweight title fight at Yoyogi #2 Gym in Tokyo, after just 73 seconds of fighting, it was Salgado celebrating and Linares wondering what happened.

Salgado basically won the fight with the first punch he threw, a looping left hook that curled around the titleholder's guard and plowed into his temple with concussive force.

Linares crashed down on his back, clearly hurt. He beat referee Luis Pabon's count, but was unable to hold off the rampaging Salgado for long. The challenger surged forward, trapping Linares in a corner, where he unleashed a flurry of punches, punctuated by a right hand that sent Linares down for a second time.

Linares bravely rose again on shaky legs, his eyes glazed, which persuaded Pabon to rescue the Venezuelan.

"I still don't believe it," said Salgado. "I never imagined it would happen so fast."

Neither did Linares, who said, "As I was knocked down, I lost my coolness. But I will regain my belt in a rematch with Salgado."

Maybe he will, but as we went to press, Salgado was prepping for his first defense, against undefeated Takashi Uchiyama, on January 11, back in Tokyo. By the time you read this, we'll know whether it's Salgado or Uchiyama that Linares will need to beat to regain the title. ■

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

FLOYD MAYWEATHER

When Floyd Mayweather announced his retirement following his 10th-round knockout of Ricky Hatton in December 2007, nobody thought that the undefeated defensive wizard had really fought his final fight. After all, when was the last time a boxer in his prime walked away from tens of millions of dollars?

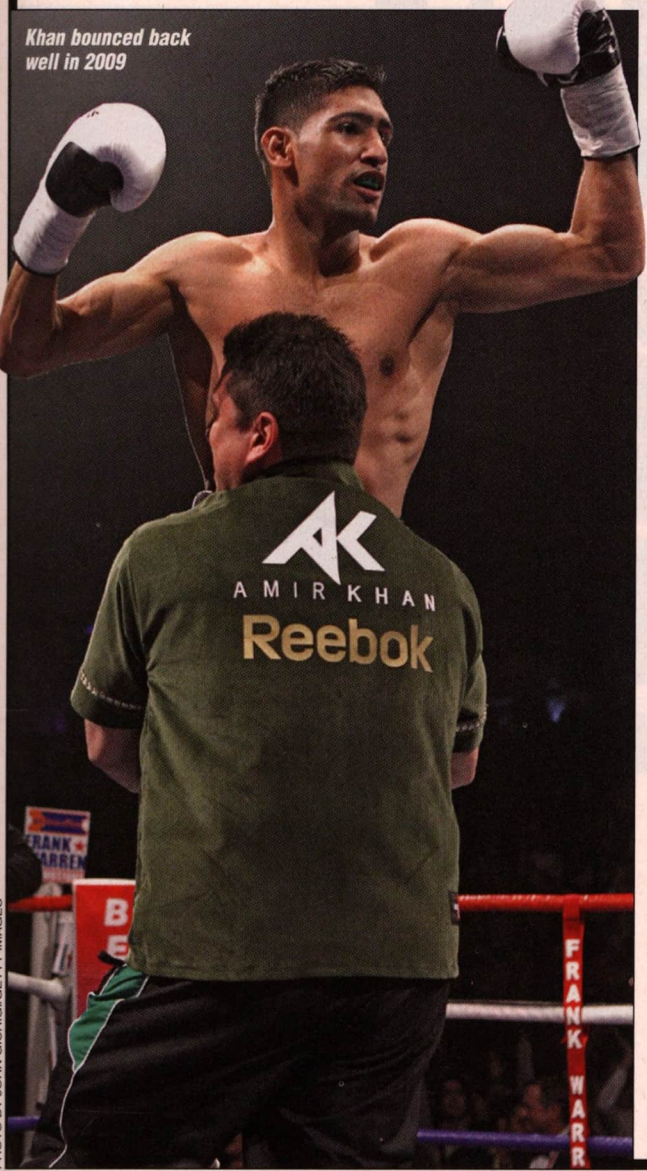
Even as the months flew by and 2008 came and went without a Mayweather fight, it would have been difficult to find a single fan or boxing insider who didn't think he would be back when the moment was right. Whether that moment was prompted by financial necessity (such as paying his humongous IRS bill), the need to bask again in the public spotlight, or the desire to win back his old pound-for-pound crown from Manny Pacquiao is immaterial. The important thing was that one of boxing's most brilliant practitioners and most recognizable personalities was back.

Also returning was the usual controversy and hyperbole that has surrounded Mayweather throughout most of his career. To start with, he selected world lightweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez as his opponent, despite the fact that it was going to be a welterweight fight. It was a cynical but savvy choice. True, Mayweather would have a significant size advantage, but Marquez had given Pacquiao two of his toughest fights, and Floyd knew that beating the Mexican would put him in a favorable light visa vis-à-vis Pacquiao.

Mayweather's return was perfectly timed

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Honorable Mention



Khan bounced back well in 2009

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Although British star **Amir Khan** ended 2008 with an easy TKO of Oisin Fagan, it was his stunning first-round knockout loss to Breidis Prescott three months prior that everybody remembered. Prescott had dispatched Khan in such a definitive manner, the Englishman was written off as a glass-chinned wannabe who had been spoon-fed a diet of stiffs before the hard-hitting Colombian exposed him. But trainer Freddie Roach still believed in Khan, and together they staged a remarkable comeback in 2009.

First, Khan butchered faded, future Hall of Famer Marco Antonio Barrera in March, and then won the WBA 140-pound title with a comprehensive 12-round decision over respected Andreas Kotelnik in July. Khan finished his year of redemption by blasting out previously undefeated Dmitriy Salita in less than a round in early-December.

Australian lightweight slugger **Michael Katsidis** also had a disappointing year in 2008, getting stopped by Joel Casamayor in a bid for the lightweight championship and then losing a split decision to Juan Diaz. But '09 saw him return with a trio of solid wins over Angel Hugo Ramirez (W 10), Jesus Chavez (KO 8), and Vincente Escobedo (W 12), which pushed him up to the number-two contender spot in THE RING's 135-pound division.

Canada-based Haitian **Jean Pascal** lost his unbeaten mark in '08 when Carl Froch edged him in a thrilling punchout for the vacant WBC super middleweight belt. But Pascal bounced back well in '09, moving up to light heavyweight, where he captured the WBC strap from Adrian Diaconu (W 12) and made a successful defenses against Silvio Branco (KO 10) and Diaconu (W 12).

The year started badly for Argentina's **Marcos Maidana**, when he lost a split decision to then-WBA super lightweight titleholder Kotelnik in Germany. But when he traveled to Los Angeles in June to fight hot prospect Victor Ortiz, Maidana took things out of the judges' hands by stopping Ortiz in the sixth round and suddenly becoming pretty hot himself.

There was also the mystery surrounding the weight for the bout, an unsavory situation that led to a last-minute deal that cost Mayweather a reported $600,000, which went to Marquez when Floyd weighed 146 pounds, two pounds over the agreed upon weight. This finagling only added to the perception that Marquez had little or no chance of winning, especially as he had only recently moved up to lightweight, following a long and successful career at featherweight and junior lightweight.

But when Mayweather ducked between the ropes at the MGM Grand Garden Arena on the evening of September 19, more than a million pay-per-view customers were watching, proving, if nothing else, that "Money" Mayweather was a bona fide PPV attraction who didn't necessarily need an Oscar De La Hoya in the other corner to ring up big numbers.

The fight itself went pretty much as expected: Mayweather dropped Marquez for a brief count in the second and proceeded to box his way to an uneventful unanimous decision. Marquez used his skills and toughness to last the 12-round distance relatively unscathed, but never looked like he had a realistic chance of winning. Mayweather was simply too big, too quick, and too slick. Moreover, he showed no ill effects of his lengthy layoff. If rust was a factor, it didn't show.

While the fight was an artistic flop, it was a financial success, which in the big picture is far more significant, especially following Pacquiao's massacre of Miguel Cotto. A match between the iconic Filipino and ostentatious American has a good chance of being the richest fight in boxing history.

And therein lies the real significance of Mayweather's comeback. It's really not about what happened between him and Marquez, it's about what's going to happen between him and Pacquiao. If Mayweather had not comeback when he did, the Sweet Science would not be on the brink of what promises to be a legendary superfight. ■

EVENT OF THE YEAR

MARGARITO CAUGHT CHEATING

He was a star on the rise. He was perhaps the most popular active Mexican fighter in boxing. Then, in approximately two hours in January, it all came apart.

Antonio Margarito, readying to fight Shane Mosley at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, was caught with an illegal substance in his handwraps. Mosley's trainer, Naazim Richardson, was in Margarito's dressing room and objected to what was described as plaster, or wet pads that would turn into plaster, hidden in the wraps. As the accusations flew, California State Inspector Dean Lohuis called for Margarito's hands to be rewrapped. Mosley's doctor, Robert Olvera, likened the material to the type of plaster used to make casts. Another pad was found in Margarito's dressing room. Both pads were sealed in a box and given to Lohuis for further assessment.

In February, Margarito and his trainer, Javier Capetillo, were suspended for one year. Margarito appealed the ruling, saying that he had not known about the prohibited wraps. Capetillo maintained it was all a misunderstanding—that he hadn't known the wraps were in his bags, that he'd brought them by mistake. The more they spoke, the worse they looked.

The occurrence not only cast a cloud over Margarito's future, it raised questions about his past. Commentators and journalists can't discuss his previous bouts without mentioning that he may have been using loaded gloves all along. Looking back at Margarito's brutal kayo of Miguel Cotto in 2008, it's tempting to explain Margarito's success as a result of plaster that hardened during the course of the bout. Cotto later claimed he'd never been hit so hard. HBO recently aired a photo taken of Margarito's taped hand moments after the Cotto fight. A pink discoloration along the taped knuckles of his left fist created more speculation. Margarito may strongly deny any wrongdoing, but he may never be fully trusted again. He's been branded.

After a mediocre start to his career, Margarito became a bit of a knockout artist in recent years. This in itself was odd because he never seemed technically proficient, throwing mostly sloppy punches with no leverage. In the parlance of old-time boxing men and gym rats, he was a "push-puncher." Yet, Margarito nearly tore off an opponent's ear in 2005, which also seems

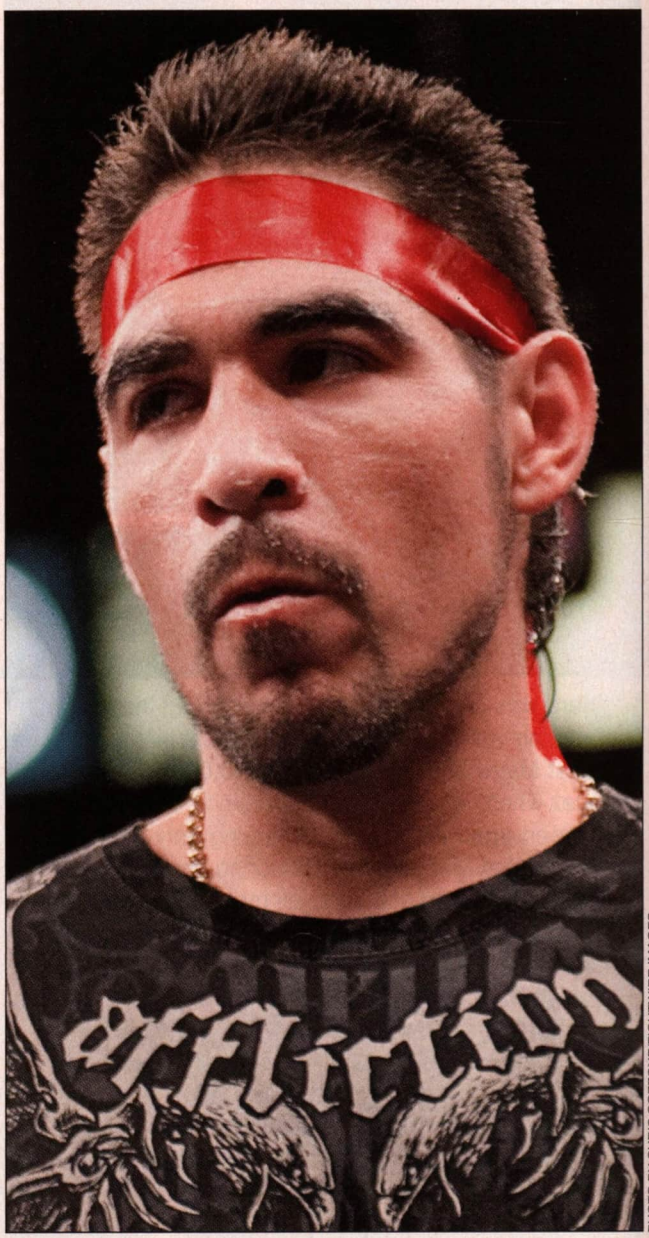
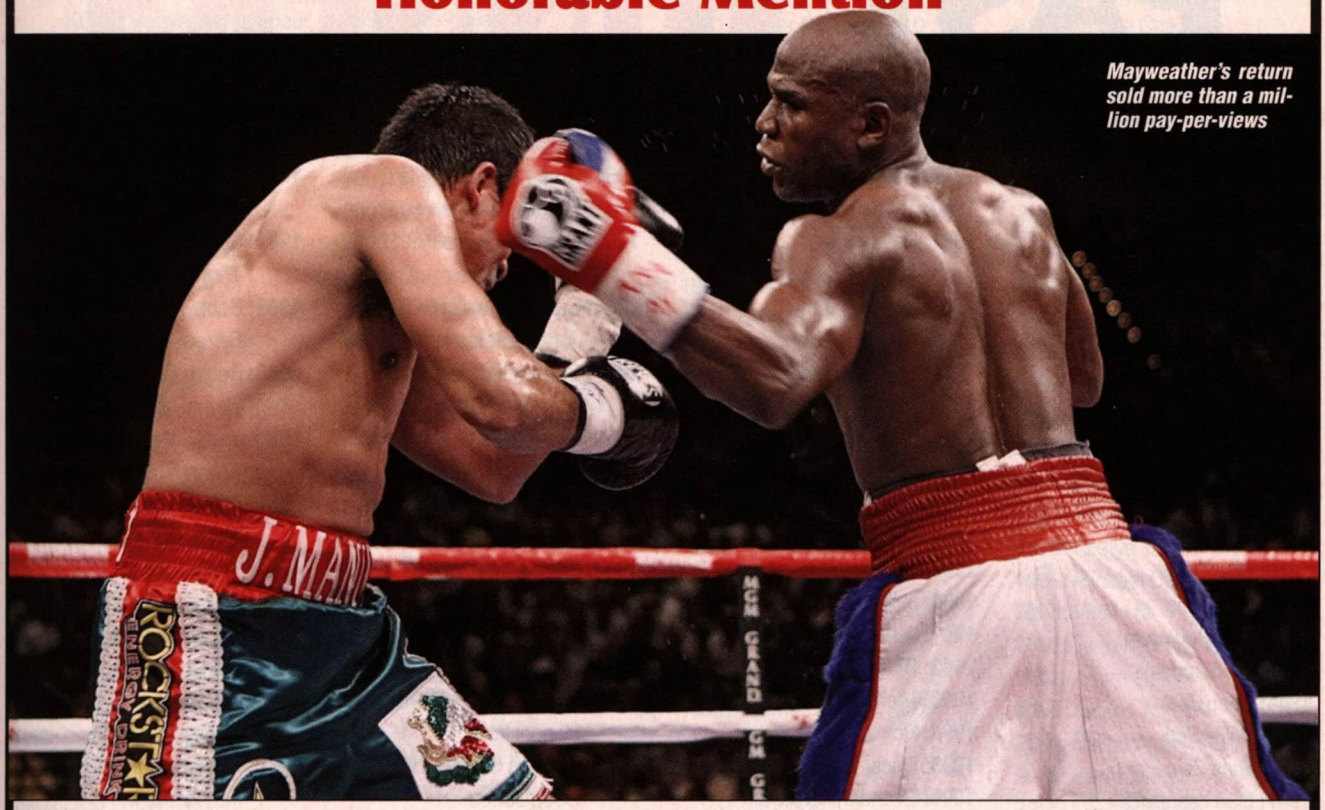


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Loaded wraps cast a shadow over Margarito's entire career

Honorable Mention



Mayweather's return sold more than a million pay-per-views

Floyd Mayweather's return to boxing after a two-year break may not have been on par with the return of Mike Tyson after his prison stint, or the return of Muhammad Ali after a three-year exile, but it certainly qualified as one of the events of the year. The fight itself wasn't much—Mayweather won a routine 12-round decision over Juan Manual Marquez that will be remembered mostly for Marquez' revelation that he drinks his own urine—but Mayweather's personality kept things interesting. From the time he coyly announced his comeback plans on the same day as Manny Pacquiao's bout with Ricky Hatton, to the way he cavalierly paid the fine after not making weight, Mayweather continuously irked us, puzzled us, and made news. The bout was a financial success, drawing a million pay-per-view buyers, proving that Mayweather, with help from HBO, has successfully sold himself to the public despite his less than compelling style.

The release of ***Tyson***, a documentary about the former heavyweight great, was well received by film critics and earned a standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival. It also brought "Iron Mike" himself back into the public eye, highlighted by appearances on several talk shows, including two turns on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, the second of which saw him share the stage with his old rival, Evander Holyfield.

Oscar De La Hoya's farewell to boxing was one of the keynotes of 2009. We'll still see plenty of him as Golden Boy Promotions continues to thrive, but we'll probably never see that great left hand in the ring again.

The deaths of **Alexis Arguello**, **Vernon Forrest**, and **Arturo Gatti** were devastating individually, but to have them come within weeks of each other was almost too much to bear. That these deaths were all violent and controversial added to the pall that was cast over the boxing world for many months.

On the brighter side, the Showtime **"Super Six" Tournament** created gales of interest among fans and the press. It got off to a good start, kicking off with **Arthur Abraham**, **Carl Froch**, and **Andre Ward** all winning their opening round bouts.

A whopping crowd of **60,000 filled the Veltins Arena** in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, to see Wladimir Klitschko defeat Ruslan Chagaev. We'd like to think the turnout was because Klitschko and Chagaev were fighting for the long vacant RING heavyweight championship, but Klitschko's fame in Germany may have pulled in a few fans too.

suspicious in retrospect. That he was demolished by Mosley added to the notion that he'd been a cheater. Stripped of his special wraps, Margarito was strangely ineffective all night.

The event also brought the routine of wrapping a fighter's hands out into the open. It's done differently in other countries and can even differ from state to state, as far as how much tape is allowed and where it can be placed on the fighter's hand. The Margarito scandal may inadvertently draw attention to inconsistencies in the process and may help prevent future controversies.

As for Margarito's future, it may involve a great big asterisk. ■

PAST WINNERS

FIGHTER Of The Year

1928: Gene Tunney
1929: Tommy Loughran
1930: Max Schmeling
1931: Tommy Loughran
1932: Jack Sharkey
1933: No Award
1934: Tony Canzoneri
Barney Ross
1935: Barney Ross
1936: Joe Louis
1937: Henry Armstrong
1938: Joe Louis
1939: Joe Louis
1940: Billy Conn
1941: Joe Louis
1942: Ray Robinson
1943: Fred Apostoli
1944: Beau Jack
1945: Willie Pep
1946: Tony Zale
1947: Gus Lesnevich
1948: Ike Williams
1949: Ezzard Charles
1950: Ezzard Charles
1951: Ray Robinson
1952: Rocky Marciano
1953: Bobo Olson
1954: Rocky Marciano
1955: Rocky Marciano
1956: Floyd Patterson
1957: Carmen Basilio
1958: Ingemar Johansson
1959: Ingemar Johansson
1960: Floyd Patterson
1961: Joe Brown
1962: Dick Tiger
1963: Cassius Clay
1964: Emile Griffith
1965: Dick Tiger
1966: No Award
1967: Joe Frazier
1968: Nino Benvenuti
1969: Jose Napoles
1970: Joe Frazier
1971: Joe Frazier
1972: Muhammad Ali
Carlos Monzon
1973: George Foreman
1974: Muhammad Ali
1975: Muhammad Ali
1976: George Foreman
1977: Carlos Zarate
1978: Muhammad Ali
1979: Ray Leonard
1980: Thomas Hearns
1981: Ray Leonard
Salvador Sanchez
1982: Larry Holmes
1983: Marvin Hagler
1984: Thomas Hearns
1985: Marvin Hagler
Donald Curry
1986: Mike Tyson
1987: Evander Holyfield
1988: Mike Tyson
1989: Pernell Whitaker
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez
1991: James Toney
1992: Riddick Bowe
1993: Michael Carbajal
1994: Roy Jones
1995: Oscar De La Hoya
1996: Evander Holyfield
1997: Evander Holyfield
1998: Floyd Mayweather
1999: Paulie Ayala
2000: Felix Trinidad
2001: Bernard Hopkins
2002: Vernon Forrest
2003: James Toney
2004: Glen Johnson
2005: Ricky Hatton
2006: Manny Pacquiao
2007: Floyd Mayweather
2008: Manny Pacquiao

FIGHT Of The Year

1945: Rocky Graziano KO 10
Freddie Cochrane
1946: Tony Zale KO 6
Rocky Graziano
1947: Rocky Graziano KO 6
Tony Zale
1948: Marcel Cerdan KO 12
Tony Zale
1949: Willie Pep W 15
Sandy Saddler
1950: Jake LaMotta KO 15
Laurent Dauthuille
1951: Jersey Joe Walcott KO 7
Ezzard Charles
1952: Rocky Marciano KO 13
Jersey Joe Walcott
1953: Rocky Marciano KO 11
Roland LaStarza
1954: Rocky Marciano KO 8
Ezzard Charles
1955: Carmen Basilio KO 12
Tony DeMarco
1956: Carmen Basilio KO 9
Johnny Saxton
1957: Carmen Basilio W 15
Ray Robinson
1958: Ray Robinson W 15
Carmen Basilio
1959: Gene Fullmer KO 14
Carmen Basilio
1960: Floyd Patterson KO 5
Ingemar Johansson
1961: Joe Brown W 15
Dave Charnley
1962: Joey Giardello W 10
Henry Hank
1963: Cassius Clay W 10
Doug Jones
1964: Cassius Clay KO 7
Sonny Liston
1965: Floyd Patterson W 12
George Chuvalo
1966: Jose Torres W 15
Eddie Cotton
1967: Nino Benvenuti W 15
Emile Griffith
1968: Dick Tiger W 10
Frank DePaula
1969: Joe Frazier KO 7
Jerry Quarry
1970: Carlos Monzon KO 12
Nino Benvenuti
1971: Joe Frazier W 15
Muhammad Ali
1972: Bob Foster KO 14
Chris Finnegan
1973: George Foreman KO 2
Joe Frazier
1974: Muhammad Ali KO 8
George Foreman
1975: Muhammad Ali KO 14
Joe Frazier
1976: George Foreman KO 5
Ron Lyle
1977: Jimmy Young W 12
George Foreman
1978: Leon Spinks W 15
Muhammad Ali
1979: Danny Lopez KO 15
Mike Ayala
1980: Matthew Saad Muhammad
KO 14 Yaqui Lopez
1981: Sugar Ray Leonard KO 14
Thomas Hearns
1982: Bobby Chacon W 15
Bazooka Limon
1983: Bobby Chacon W 12
Cornelius Boza-Edwards
1984: Jose Luis Ramirez KO 4
Edwin Rosario
1985: Marvin Hagler KO 3
Thomas Hearns
1986: Steve Cruz W 15
Barry McGuigan
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12
Marvin Hagler
1988: Tony Lopez W 12
Rocky Lockridge
1989: Roberto Duran W 12
Iran Barkley
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez KO 12
Meldrick Taylor
1991: Robert Quiroga W 12
Akeem Anifowoshe
1992: Riddick Bowe W 12
Evander Holyfield
1993: Michael Carbajal KO 7
Chiquita Gonzalez
1994: Jorge Castro KO 9
John David Jackson
1995: Saman Sorjaturong KO 7
Chiquita Gonzalez
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11
Mike Tyson
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5
Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10
Arturo Gatti
1999: Paulie Ayala W 12
Johnny Tapia
2000: Erik Morales W 12
Marco Antonio Barrera
2001: Micky Ward W 10
Emanuel Burton
2002: Micky Ward W 10
Arturo Gatti
2003: Arturo Gatti W 10
Micky Ward
2004: Marco Antonio Barrera
W 12 Erik Morales

2005: Diego Corrales KO 10 Jose Luis Castillo
2006: Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 10 Mahyar Monshipour
2007: Israel Vazquez KO 6 Rafael Marquez
2008: Israel Vazquez W 12 Rafael Marquez

ROUND Of The Year

1945: Joyce-Williams, 12
1946: Zale-Graziano, 6
1947: Louis-Walcott, 4
1948: Louis-Walcott, 11
1949: Graziano-Fusari, 10
1950: LaMotta-Dauthuille, 15
1951: Marciano-Louis, 8
1952: Marciano-Walcott, 13
1953: Gavilan-Basilio, 2
1954: Moore-Johnson, 14
1955: Moore-Olson, 3
1956: Robinson-Olson, 4
1957: Robinson-Fullmer, 5
1958: Johansson-Machen, 1
1959: Johansson-Patterson, 3
1960: Patterson-Johansson, 5
1961: Patterson-Johansson, 1
1962: Liston-Patterson, 1
1963: Liston-Patterson, 1
1964: Torres-Olson, 1
1965: Torres-Pastrano, 6
1966: Ortiz-Ramos, 5
1967: Tiger-Rouse, 12
1968: Foster-Tiger, 4
1969: Benvenuti-Rodriguez, 11
1970: Ali-Bonavena, 15
1971: Frazier-Ali, 15
1972: Ali-Foster, 5
1973: Foreman-Frazier, 2
1974: Ali-Foreman, 8
1975: Ali-Frazier, 12
1976: Foreman-Lyle, 4 & 5
1977: Young-Foreman, 12
1978: Spinks-Ali, 15
1979: Franklin-Johnson, 8
1980: Saad Muhammad-Lopez, 8
1981: Lee-LoCicero, 5
1982: Gomez-Pintor, 3
1983: Holmes-Witherspoon, 9
1984: Meza-Garza, 1
1985: Hagler-Hearns, 1
1986: Cruz-McGuigan, 15
1987: Seabrooks-Jacob, 1
1988: Tyson-Spinks, 1
1989: Gutierrez-Franklin, 12
1990: Davis-Breland, 9
1991: No Award
1992: Bowe-Holyfield, 10
1993: Norris-Waters, 2
1994: Castro-Jackson, 9
1995: Sorjaturong-Gonzalez, 7
1996: Liles-Littles, 3
1997: Gatti-Ruelas, 5
1998: Robinson-Gatti II, 3
1999: De La Hoya-Quartey, 6
2000: Morales-Barrera, 5
2001: Hopkins-Trinidad, 10
2002: Ward-Gatti I, 9
2003: Freitas-Barrios, 11
2004: Barrera-Morales III, 11
2005: Corrales-Castillo I, 10
2006: Sithchatchawal-Monshipour, 10
2007: Vazquez-Marquez II, 3
2008: Vazquez-Marquez III, 4

KNOCKOUT Of The Year

1989: Michael Nunn KO 1 Sumbu Kalambay
1990: Terry Norris KO 1 John Mugabi
1991: No Award
1992: Kennedy McKinney KO 11 Welcome Ncita
Morris East KO 11 Akinobu Hiranaka
1993: Gerald McClellan KO 5 Julian Jackson
1994: George Foreman KO 10 Michael Moorer
1995: Julio Cesar Vasquez KO 11 Carl Daniels
1996: Wilfredo Vasquez KO 11 Eloy Rojas
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Roy Jones KO 4 Virgil Hill
1999: Derrick Jefferson KO 6 Maurice Harris
2000: Ben Tackie KO 10 Roberto Garcia
2001: Lennox Lewis KO 4 Hasim Rahman
2002: Lennox Lewis KO 8 Mike Tyson
2003: Rocky Juarez KO 10 Antonio Diaz
2004: Antonio Tarver KO 2 Roy Jones
2005: Allan Green KO 1 Jaidon Codrington
2006: Calvin Brock KO 6 Zuri Lawrence
2007: Nonito Donaire KO 5 Vic Darchinyan
2008: Edison Miranda KO 3 David Banks

UPSET Of The Year

1980: Yasutsune Uehara KO 6 Sammy Serrano
1981: Roger Stafford W 10 Pipino Cuevas
1982: Kirkland Laing W 10 Roberto Duran
1983: Gerrie Coetzee KO 10 Michael Dokes
1984: Gene Hatcher KO 11 Johnny Bumphus
1985: Michael Spinks W 15 Larry Holmes
1986: Lloyd Honeyghan KO 6 Donald Curry
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Iran Barkley KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1989: Rene Jacquot W 12 Donald Curry
1990: Buster Douglas KO 10 Mike Tyson
1991: No Award
1992: Azumah Nelson KO 8 Jeff Fenech
1993: Simon Brown KO 4 Terry Norris
1994: Vuyani Bungu W 12 Kennedy McKinney
1995: Willy Salazar KO 7 Danny Romero
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Vince Phillips KO 10 Kostya Tszyu
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Willy Wise W 10 Julio Cesar Chavez
2000: Jose Luis Castillo W 12 Steve Johnston
2001: Hasim Rahman KO 5 Lennox Lewis
2002: Juan Carlos Rubio W 10 Francisco Bojado
2003: Corrie Sanders KO 2 Wladimir Klitschko
2004: Glen Johnson KO 9 Roy Jones
2005: Zahir Raheem W 12 Erik Morales
2006: Carlos Baldomir W 12 Zab Judah
2007: Nonito Donaire KO 5 Vic Darchinyan
2008: Bernard Hopkins W 12 Kelly Pavlik

COMEBACK Of The Year

1980: Shoji Oguma
1981: Jimmy Young
1982: Bobby Chacon
1983: Roberto Duran
1984: Marvin Johnson
1985: Lupe Pintor
1986: Edwin Rosario
1987: Frankie Duarte
1988: Michael Dokes
1989: Roberto Duran
1990: Tony Lopez
1991: Vinny Pazienza
1992: Iran Barkley
1993: Zack Padilla
1994: George Foreman
1995: Azumah Nelson
1996: Danny Romero
1997: Vince Phillips
1998: Kostya Tszyu
1999: Michael Carbajal
2000: Virgil Hill
2001: John Michael Johnson
2002: Arturo Gatti
2003: James Toney
2004: Marco Antonio Barrera
2005: Ike Quartey
2006: Oleg Maskaev
2007: Paul Malignaggi
2008: Vitali Klitschko

EVENT Of The Year

1993: Fan Man at Holyfield-Bowe
1994: Revenge: The Rematches
1995: Tyson returns
1996: Riot at The Garden
1997: The bite
1998: Tyson's reinstatement
1999: The IBF indictments
2000: Mosley vs. De La Hoya
2001: Middleweight World Championship Series
2002: The Lewis-Tyson press conference brawl
2003: Roy Jones fights at heavyweight
2004: Lennox Lewis retirement
2005: *The Contender*
2006: Corrales-Castillo III Weigh-in
2007: Mayweather-De La Hoya
2008: Retirement of Floyd Mayweather

THE 31ST ANNUAL HIGHLY UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL AWARDS

Trainer of the Year
Freddie Roach

Managers of the Year
Ziggy Rozalski (Tomasz Adamek)
Rob Murray (Eddie Chambers)

Female Fighter of the Year
Susi Kentikian

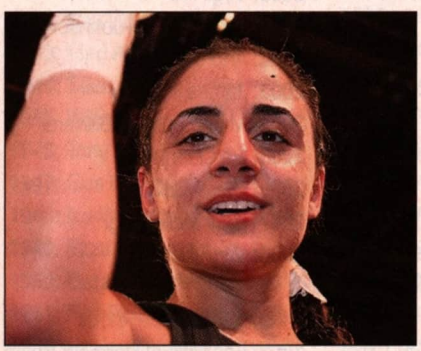


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Kentikian: The "Killer Queen"

Female Fight of the Year
Holly Holm W 10 Myriam Lamare

Most Exciting Division
Welterweight

Most Boring Division
Heavyweight

Division With Most Potential
Welterweight

Division With Least Potential
Flyweight

Count Dracula Bloodbath Crimson Band-Aid
Amir Khan KO 5 Marco Antonio Barrera
Alfonso Gomez KO 8 Juan Buendia
Miguel Cotto W 12 Josh Clottey

Future Champion Trophy
Guillermo Rigondeaux

Billy Graham-Joey Giardello Highway Robbery Award
Hector Sanchez W 8 DeMarcus Corley
Fariz Kazimov W 10 DeMarcus Corley
Kermit Cintron D 12 Sergio Martinez
Rocky Juarez D 12 Chris John
Joan Guzman D 12 Ali Funeka
Tim Coleman W 12 Mike Arnaoutis

Duane Bobick Disappointment Award
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., Samuel Peter, Victor Ortiz

Rocky Balboa Gutsiest Effort Award
Bernard Dunne (vs. Ricardo Cordoba)
Brian Minto (vs. Chris Arreola)
Marcos Maidana (vs. Victor Ortiz)
Juan Manuel Lopez (vs. Rogers Mtagwa)

Henry Armstrong Windmill Imitation
Paul Williams

Red Light-Green Light Crossroads Fight Of The Year
Amir Khan KO 5 Marco Antonio Barrera

Joe Bugner Just-Glad-To-Be-Here Trophy
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. (vs. Troy Rowland)
Marco Antonio Rubio (vs. Kelly Pavlik)

Archie Moore Ol'-Man-River Rocking Chair
Veerapol Sahaprom

Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom Featherfists Award
Simphiwe Nongqayi

Muhammad Ali Time-To-Retire Pension Check
Roy Jones, Jeff Lacy, Jorge Arce, Emmanuel Clottey, Enzo Maccarinelli, Kevin Kelley, Andrey Tsurkan, Andrew Golota, Kelvin Davis

Tony Ayala Jr. Wasted Talent Trophy
James Kirkland

Best Tiny Man In Elevator Shoes
Ivan Calderon

Thomas Dewey "Fading Down The Stretch" Award
Jermain Taylor

Should've-Stayed-Out-To-Pasture Wall Calendar
Eric Lucas, Johnny McClain, Jameel McCline, Shannon Briggs, Christy Martin

Eder Jofre Best-Fighter-You-Never-Saw Award
Anselmo Moreno

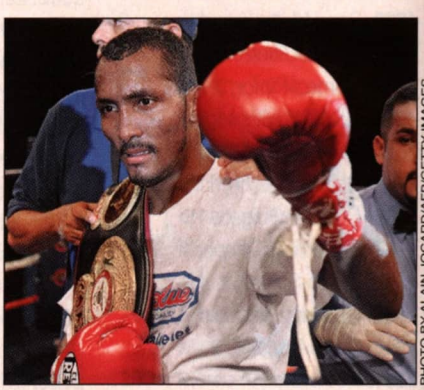


PHOTO BY ALAIN JOCARD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Moreno: Panama's best-kept secret

The Comedy-On-TV Golden Giggles Award
Chris Arreola's awkward, uncomfortable, tear-filled, but strangely hilarious and F-bomb-loaded in-ring interview following his loss to Vitali Klitschko

Tony Zale Bodypuncher Memorial
Lucian Bute

Buster Mathis Miniature Empty Refrigerator
Odlanier Solis

Don't-Get-Up-To-Get-A-Beer Silver Mug
Danny Green KO 1 Roy Jones
Amir Khan KO 1 Dmitriy Salita
Hozumi Hasegawa KO 1 Nestor Rocha
Manny Pacquiao KO 2 Ricky Hatton
Victor Ortiz KO 2 Mike Arnaoutis
Edwin Valero KO 2 Antonio Pitalua

Howard Cosell "We Love Boxing" Trophy
The *New York Times*, for sending a writer to one boxing match all year, and only after bearing the brunt of a critical article by Thomas Hauser and an angry letter from Larry Merchant

Ken Norton Media Good Guy Award
Paulie Malignaggi

Muhammad Ali "How To Lose With Class" Trophy
Juan Diaz

Spit-Or-Get-Off-The-Pot Award
Omar Narvaez, Sakio Bika, Malik Scott, David Tua

Jake LaMotta Cast-Iron-Chin Anvil
Gerry Penalosa (vs. Juan Manuel Lopez)
Rogers Mtagwa (vs. Juan Manuel Lopez)
Joshua Clottey (vs. Miguel Cotto)

Most Improved Fighter Award
Amir Khan

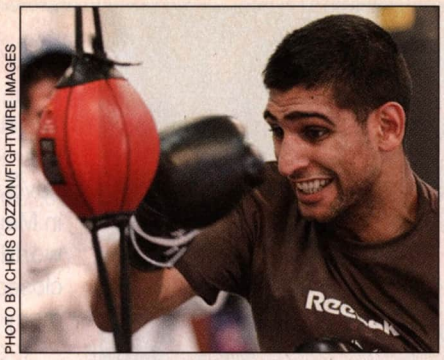


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZON/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Khan: Made huge strides in 2009

Gene Tunney Distinguished Champion Award
Wladimir Klitschko

Tap Tap Makathini Name Of The Year
Pigmy Muangchaiyaphum

Azumah Nelson "Where'd He Come From?" Trophy
Jeffrey Mathebula (L 12 Celestino Caballero)
Miguel Acosta (KO 9 Urbano Antillon)
Juan Carlos Salgado (KO 1 Jorge Linares)
Tony Grano (KO 4 Travis Kauffman)

TV Mismatches Of The Year
Miguel Cotto KO 5 Michael Jennings (PPV)
Roy Jones KO 5 Omar Sheika (PPV)
Andre Ward KO 3 Shelby Pudwill (Showtime)
Andre Dirrell W 10 Derrick Findley (Showtime)
John Molina KO 2 Frankie Archuleta (Showtime)
Deontay Wilder KO 1 Travis Allen (ESPN2)
Alfredo Angulo KO 3 Harry Joe Yorgey (HBO)

Steve Martin Arrow-Through-Head Ridiculous Gimmick
Roy Jones, at age 40, suddenly giving himself the new nickname "Captain Hook" and donning a pirate outfit to promote his fight with Jeff Lacy

Gerry Cooney Proper Pigmentation Award
John Duddy

Never-In-A-Bad-Fight Purple Heart
Miguel Cotto, Delvin Rodriguez, Rogers Mtagwa, Joseph Agbeko

Rip-Off-The-Public Non-Effort Of The Year
Robert Guerrero (No-Contest 2 Daud Yordan)
Nate Campbell (No-Contest 3 Timothy Bradley)

Mando Muniz "If At First You Don't Succeed" Persistence Award
Rodel Mayol, Ali Funeka

Peaches & Herb "Reunited And It Feels So Good" Award
Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson on *Oprah*

Yogi Berra "It's Not Over Till It's Over" Resiliency Award
Carl Froch (KO 12 Jermain Taylor)
Ola Afolabi (KO 9 Enzo Maccarinelli)
Nobuo Nashiro (KO 8 Konosuke Tomiyama)

Dave Tiberi Disappearing Fighter Award
Kelly Pavlik, Verno Phillips

Emile Griffith "Steady If Unspectacular" Trophy
Zsolt Erdei, Luis Collazo, Chris John

Facial Monstrosity Of The Year Golden Enswell
Miguel Cotto (vs. Josh Clottey and Manny Pacquiao)

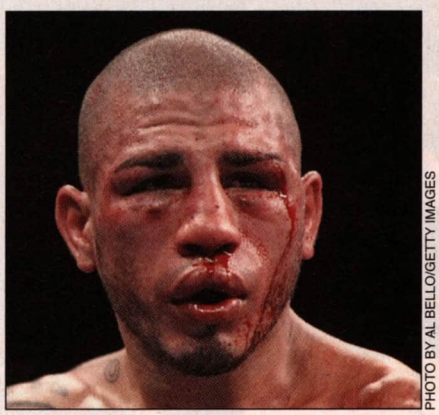


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

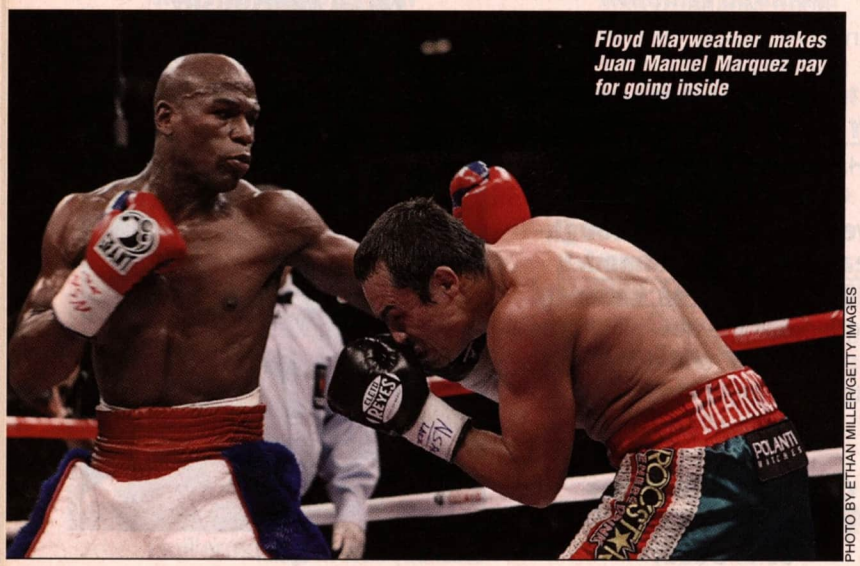
Cotto: Gory mess ... again!

Manny Pacquiao slams a right into Miguel Cotto

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

"BEST FIGHTER" POLL

A Survey Of The Experts



Floyd Mayweather makes Juan Manuel Marquez pay for going inside

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Manny Pacquiao keeps reaching new heights with each challenge he conquers. You can now include winning THE RING's "The Best Fighter Poll" for the second year in a row. Pac-Man accomplished this by devouring Ricky Hatton in less than two rounds in May to become THE RING's junior welterweight world champion, then the Filipino dynamo closed out '09 by smashing Miguel Cotto, a feat many were dubious he'd be able to do.

It seems now that nothing is beyond Pacquiao, including making further history in The Best Fighter Poll. Pac-Man's back-to-back poll victories allow him to join an exclusive group that includes Roy Jones, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Mike Tyson, Julio Cesar Chavez, Pernell Whitaker, and Floyd Mayweather—all Hall of Famers or future Hall of Famers.

But this 29th annual poll came with a caveat—the return of Mayweather from a brief retirement. Some experts felt Mayweather is still the best in the world, based on his one fight back against the formidable though undersized Juan Manuel Marquez. Two first-place votes for Mayweather prevented Pacquiao from being a unanimous selection, as he was last year.

This year's poll also marked an interesting trend. There were four newcomers among the top 10: Chad Dawson, Nonito Donaire, Ivan Calderon, and Arthur Abraham.

Dawson made the biggest push, debuting at five, followed by other first-timers Donaire at eight, Calderon at nine, and Abraham at 10.

Pacquiao, Mayweather, Shane Mosley, Bernard Hopkins, and Juan Manuel Marquez were the fighters who received a vote from all the experts polled.

This year's panel: Showtime's *ShoBox* ringside analyst Steve Farhood, heavyweight contender Eddie Chambers, HBO's *Championship Boxing* blow-by-blow announcer Jim Lampley, British *Boxing News* senior writer Tris Dixon, RingTV.com Editor Michael Rosenthal, Philadelphia *Daily News* boxing writer Bernie Fernandez, Showtime *Championship Boxing* ringside analyst Al Bernstein, HBO *Championship Boxing*'s unofficial scorer Harold Lederman, and ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* studio host Bernie Osuna.

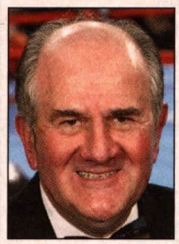
To compile the standings, we awarded points for each vote a fighter received: 15 points for a first place vote, 12 for a second-place vote, nine for a third-place vote, seven for a fourth-place vote, six for a fifth-place vote, five for a sixth-place vote, four for a seventh-place vote, three for an eighth-place vote, two for a ninth-place vote, and one for a 10th-place vote.

Tris Dixon

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Shane Mosley
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Israel Vazquez
7. Nonito Donaire
8. Paul Williams
9. Ivan Calderon
10. Chad Dawson

"Pacquiao is number one based on the competition he has faced and how he has beaten them. Had Mayweather done a similar job on Cotto and whipped, say, Mosley and Williams, then his case would be stronger. The shallow Juan Manuel Marquez win showed us nothing we did not already know, apart from that Marquez is ineffectual above 140 pounds and maybe even 135 pounds. Mosley's back in business, turning his career around against the disgraced Margarito, while nothing Hopkins has done warrants him rising or falling in the list. Vazquez is the most vulnerable on the list, but that adds to his Saad Muhammad-like appeal, and Nonito Donaire's strong run now goes back eight years and 20 fights."

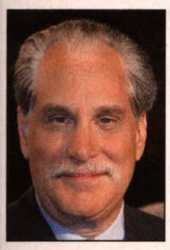
Harold Lederman



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Chad Dawson
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Hozumi Hasegawa
6. Shane Mosley
7. Andre Ward
8. Wladimir Klitschko
9. Juan Manuel Marquez
10. Jean Pascal

"After beating De La Hoya, Hatton, Cotto, how you can take number-one away from Pacquiao? That's why he's the best. What Mayweather did after the long layoff and beating Marquez the way he did, what a great performance. They're pretty close, and they're great fighters, who will decide it in the ring. I put Dawson there at three because he has great skill with wins over Glen Johnson and Antonio Tarver. No one wants to fight Bad Chad, and no one has come close to beating him. Bernard is still unbelievable at 45. Hasegawa is certainly a tremendous fighter and he deserves to be in there."

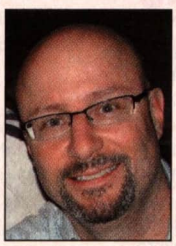
Al Bernstein



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Shane Mosley
4. Nonito Donaire
5. Ivan Calderon
6. Chad Dawson
7. Bernard Hopkins
8. Arthur Abraham
9. Paul Williams
10. Juan Manuel Marquez

"I wanted to include Tim Bradley and Chris John, but those two are right on the brink. Pacquiao has been fighting and he's been active, and he deserves to be number one until someone knocks him off. Shane Mosley is so strong in everything he does. Donaire is great, and I don't think he's nearly as good as he can be. He's still young and he's big, tall, strong, and athletic. He can win several different ways, by being a puncher, a boxer. I think Nonito is going to be a great, great fighter for a while."

Mike Rosenthal



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Chad Dawson
4. Shane Mosley
5. Paul Williams
6. Arthur Abraham
7. Bernard Hopkins
8. Juan Manuel Marquez
9. Timothy Bradley
10. Sergio Martinez

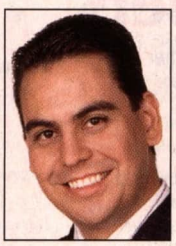
"Floyd Mayweather is the most-gifted boxer in the world, but this is Manny Pacquiao's era, based on his accomplishments. The Filipino superhero, somehow getting better as he moves up in weight, has dispatched one elite opponent after the other to draw comparisons to the greatest fighters ever. Mayweather has dazzled us with his skills, but is too careful both in the ring and in choosing his opponents. Fortunately, it looks like they'll have the rare opportunity to prove who is best in the ring. I can't wait."

Bernard Fernandez

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Manny Pacquiao
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Paul Williams
5. Shane Mosley
6. Chad Dawson
7. Juan Manuel Marquez
8. Andre Ward
9. Vitali Klitschko
10. Nonito Donaire

"There's only one way to separate the two top claimants for designation at number-one, pound-for-pound fighter in the world, so here's hoping that Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao live up to the hype and give us the clear-the-decks scrap we haven't seen since Sugar Ray Leonard and Tommy Hearns went at it the first time in the 1980s. I'm casting a shaky vote for Floyd for number one because I've yet to see him lose, or even look particularly vulnerable, but his air-tight defense could be tested like never before by Manny's punches in bunches."

Bernie Osuna



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Shane Mosley
4. Chad Dawson
5. Paul Williams
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Bernard Hopkins
8. Nonito Donaire
9. Carl Froch
10. Ivan Calderon

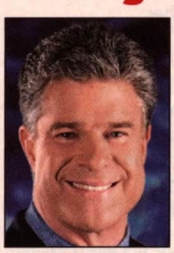
"Manny Pacquiao left no doubt in 2009 and sits atop the pound-for-pound throne after dominating Miguel Cotto, annihilating Ricky Hatton, and sending Oscar De La Hoya into retirement in a span of 11 months. With the Pac-Man, it's not so much what he does, which is impressive in and of itself, but it's how he does it that separates him from the rest. Floyd Mayweather takes the second spot after coming back and showing no rust, despite a 20-month layoff, in toying with Juan Manuel Marquez. That sets up the much-anticipated showdown for the pound-for-pound crown against Pacquiao. At age 38, Shane Mosley continues to quietly ply his trade atop the welterweight."

Steve Farhood

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Shane Mosley
5. Ivan Calderon
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Chad Dawson
8. Paul Williams
9. Nonito Donaire
10. Arthur Abraham

"The one thing that separates Pac-Man from previous pound-for-pound leaders is the fact that he's improved while on top. How many fighters can you think of who ascended to such status and then got even better? For that, Freddie Roach deserves much of the credit, so I rank him 1-A, even though he hasn't fought since 1986. Pacquiao just turned 31, and experience counts for a lot because the top six fighters on my list are 30 or older. Among them is Calderon, whom I believe is generally underrated. He's no Ricardo Lopez, but he's won titles at two weights, gone 16-0-1 in world title fights, and defended on the road. If that's not worthy of a top-10 ranking, I don't know what the criteria should be. The fighters it kills me to leave out: Chris John and Tomasz Adamek."

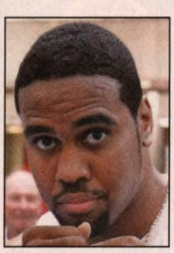
Jim Lampley



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Shane Mosley
4. Paul Williams
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Arthur Abraham
7. Tim Bradley
8. Juan Manuel Marquez
9. Celestino Caballero
10. Wladimir/Vitali Klitschko

"I placed Pacquiao one because of his activity and entertainment value for knocking people out. I put Mayweather two because he's at a level that's only between Pacquiao and him right now. Shane is still very good, and he's doing what he does against the best. I had to put Tim Bradley in there because I'm so impressed by what an all-around fighter Bradley is with his offense, his defense, he does everything well. Vitali and Wladimir both deserve more credit than they get, despite the shape of the heavyweight division."

Eddie Chambers



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Manny Pacquiao
3. Shane Mosley
4. Paul Williams
5. Chad Dawson
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Bernard Hopkins
8. Miguel Cotto
9. Wladimir Klitschko
10. Tim Bradley

"Regardless of all the great things Manny has done, I still believe Floyd is the greatest fighter today. He dominated a guy that gave Pacquiao a lot of problems. In my opinion, Floyd is a better fighter technically, he hasn't lost a fight yet, and he beat someone who was a pound-for-pound guy with the greatest of ease. You take away all the antics and he has been solid all around, in and out of the ring. Tim Bradley hasn't accomplished all the things a lot of the guys on my list have, but I'm looking at what he's done and where he's going. He's going to be a superstar."

The Ring

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Shane Mosley
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Nonito Donaire
7. Miguel Cotto
8. Celestino Caballero
9. Chad Dawson
10. Paul Williams

"Beating Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton, and now Miguel Cotto would solidify a number-one spot for any fighter. But it was the devastating way in which Pac-Man dispatched these fighters, all three arguably future Hall of Famers, that catapults Pacquiao to the top of the list. Mayweather will get his chance to prove his place as this generation's best when the two meet. Mayweather's careful style and penchant for not finishing opponents when he has them in trouble somewhat diminishes his status."

The Results

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   144 points
2. **Floyd Mayweather**
   126 points
3. **Shane Mosley**
   79 points
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   61 points
5. **Chad Dawson**
   48 points
6. **Paul Williams**
   42 points
7. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   40 points
8. **Nonito Donaire**
   22 points
9. **Ivan Calderon**
   15 points
10. **Arthur Abraham**
    14 points

Also Receiving Votes

Tim Bradley—7 points
Andre Ward—7 points
Miguel Cotto—7 points
Hozumi Hasegawa—6 points
Wladimir Klitschko—6 points
Celestino Caballero—5 points
Israel Vazquez—5 points
Vitali Klitschko—3 points
Carl Froch—2 points
Sergio Martinez—1 point
Jean Pascal—1 point

2008 POLL
1. Manny Pacquiao—150
2. Joe Calzaghe—101
3. Juan Manuel Marquez—99
4. Bernard Hopkins—73
5. Antonio Margarito—52
6. Israel Vazquez—50
7. Rafael Marquez—31
8. Miguel Cotto—28
9. Ricky Hatton—18 (tie)
9. Paul Williams—18 (tie)

2007 POLL
1. Floyd Mayweather—150
2. Manny Pacquiao—103
3. Joe Calzaghe—83
4. Bernard Hopkins—63
5. Juan Manuel Marquez—58
6. Miguel Cotto—51
7. Israel Vazquez—30
8. Kelly Pavlik—21
9. Winky Wright—15
10. Juan Diaz—13 (tie)
10. Oscar De La Hoya—13 (tie)

2006 POLL
1. Floyd Mayweather—141
2. Manny Pacquiao—129
3. Winky Wright—84
4. Jermain Taylor—61
5. Joe Calzaghe—49
6. Rafael Marquez—28
7. Ricky Hatton—23
8. Shane Mosley—20
9. Jose Luis Castillo—19
10. Bernard Hopkins—16

2005 POLL
1. Floyd Mayweather—144
2. Winky Wright—113
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—70
4. Juan Manuel Marquez—43
5. Rafael Marquez—39
6. Ricky Hatton—38
7. Jose Luis Castillo—36
8. Jermain Taylor—34
9. Zab Judah—31
10. Antonio Tarver—30

2004 POLL
1. Bernard Hopkins—150
2. Floyd Mayweather—111
3. Kostya Tszyu—88
4. Winky Wright—70
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—52
6. Manny Pacquiao—38
7. Erik Morales—26
8. Juan Manuel Marquez—25
9. Felix Trinidad—22
10. Diego Corrales—11 (tie)
10. Rafael Marquez—11 (tie)

2003 POLL
1. Roy Jones—142
2. Bernard Hopkins—114
3. Floyd Mayweather—97
4. Shane Mosley—53
5. Kostya Tszyu—48
6. Oscar De La Hoya—45
7. Manny Pacquiao—38
8. James Toney—35
9. Erik Morales—31
10. Lennox Lewis—22

2002 POLL
1. Roy Jones—135
2. Oscar De La Hoya—89
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—78 (tie)
3. Vernon Forrest—78 (tie)
3. Bernard Hopkins—78 (tie)
6. Floyd Mayweather—45
7. Lennox Lewis—43
8. Kostya Tszyu—42
9. Erik Morales—25
10. Shane Mosley—13

2001 POLL
1. Shane Mosley—132
2. Roy Jones—108
3. Bernard Hopkins—98
4. Floyd Mayweather—77
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—44
6. Oscar De La Hoya—40
7. Felix Trinidad—39
8. Kostya Tszyu—34
9. Lennox Lewis—23
10. Ricardo Lopez—22

2000 POLL
1. Felix Trinidad—126
2. Shane Mosley—123
3. Roy Jones—109
4. Oscar De La Hoya—43
5. Floyd Mayweather—39
6. Naseem Hamed—37
7. Ricardo Lopez—35
8. Diego Corrales—33
9. Bernard Hopkins—32
10. Lennox Lewis—31

1999 POLL
1. Roy Jones—150
2. Oscar De La Hoya—85
3. Floyd Mayweather—78
4. Shane Mosley—68 (tie)
4. Felix Trinidad—68 (tie)
6. Mark Johnson—47 (tie)
6. Ricardo Lopez—47 (tie)
8. Erik Morales—21
9. Bernard Hopkins—16
10. Fernando Vargas—15

1998 POLL
1. Roy Jones—141
2. Oscar De La Hoya—123
3. Felix Trinidad—67
4. Shane Mosley—65
5. Evander Holyfield—55
6. Mark Johnson—45
7. Naseem Hamed—33
8. Ricardo Lopez—23
9. Floyd Mayweather—19
10. Pernell Whitaker—14

1997 POLL
1. Oscar De La Hoya—123
2. Roy Jones—117
3. Ricardo Lopez—83
4. Evander Holyfield—80
5. Felix Trinidad—65
6. Pernell Whitaker—37
7. Naseem Hamed—28
8. Mark Johnson—22 (tie)
8. Junior Jones—22 (tie)
10. Johnny Tapia—18

1996 POLL
1. Roy Jones—123
2. Oscar De La Hoya—107
3. Pernell Whitaker—92
4. Evander Holyfield—64
5. Felix Trinidad—59
6. Ricardo Lopez—56
7. Terry Norris—28
8. Ike Quartey—21
9. Azumah Nelson—12
10. Yuri Arbachakov—11

1995 POLL
1. Roy Jones—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—126
3. Oscar De La Hoya—74
4. Felix Trinidad—59
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—48
6. Riddick Bowe—44
7. Ricardo Lopez—37
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—18
9. Ike Quartey—16
10. Naseem Hamed—12

1994 POLL
1. Pernell Whitaker—130
2. Roy Jones—129
3. Frankie Randall—53
4. Ricardo Lopez—45
5. Orlando Canizales—39
6. Chiquita Gonzalez—38
7. James Toney—36
8. Gerald McClellan—33
9. Felix Trinidad—29
10. Kevin Kelley—28

1993 POLL
1. Pernell Whitaker—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—86
3. Terry Norris—84
4. James Toney—76
5. Michael Carbajal—39
6. Evander Holyfield—36
7. Buddy McGirt—28
8. Roy Jones—23
9. Orlando Canizales—22
10. Ricardo Lopez—21

1992 POLL
1. Julio Cesar Chavez—136
2. Terry Norris—91
3. Pernell Whitaker—85
4. Buddy McGirt—60
5. Riddick Bowe—45
6. Orlando Canizales—36
7. Azumah Nelson—34
8. Lennox Lewis—24
9. Julian Jackson—18
10. Roy Jones—15 (tie)
10. Mike McCallum—15 (tie)

1991 POLL
1. Julio Cesar Chavez—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—100
3. Evander Holyfield—78
4. Mike Tyson—55
5. Meldrick Taylor—48
6. Mike McCallum—38
7. Thomas Hearns—34
8. Khaosai Galaxy—25
9. Terry Norris—22
10. Simon Brown—21

1990 POLL
1. Julio Cesar Chavez—123
2. Pernell Whitaker—104
3. Mike Tyson—71
4. Meldrick Taylor—57
5. Buster Douglas—51
6. Simon Brown—27
7. Antonio Esparragoza—25
8. Michael Nunn—23
9. Evander Holyfield—21
10. Humberto Gonzalez—14

1989 POLL
1. Mike Tyson—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—91
3. Meldrick Taylor—61
4. Michael Nunn—60
5. Evander Holyfield—56
6. Pernell Whitaker—46
7. Ray Leonard—28
8. Jeff Fenech—27
9. Azumah Nelson—18
10. Marlon Starling—16

1988 POLL
1. Mike Tyson—144
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—118
3. Evander Holyfield—66
4. Ray Leonard—55
5. Jeff Fenech—44
6. Michael Nunn—33
7. Azumah Nelson—32
8. Jung Koo Chang—23
9. Buddy McGirt—21
10. Sumbu Kalambay—18

NO POLL IN 1987

1986 POLL
1. Marvin Hagler—138
2. Mike Tyson—92
3. Donald Curry—59
4. Thomas Hearns—52
5. Edwin Rosario—47
6. Azumah Nelson—45 (tie)
6. Michael Spinks—45 (tie)
8. Evander Holyfield—32
9. Julio Cesar Chavez—26
10. Hector Camacho—22

1985 POLL
1. Marvin Hagler—150
2. Hector Camacho—86
3. Michael Spinks—85
4. Donald Curry—78
5. Thomas Hearns—42
6. Barry McGuigan—32
7. Milton McCrory—25
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—22 (tie)
8. Pinklon Thomas—22 (tie)
10. Larry Holmes—21

1984 POLL
1. Marvin Hagler—112
2. Aaron Pryor—77
3. Larry Holmes—72
4. Eusebio Pedroza—66
5. Hector Camacho—50
6. Jeff Chandler—47 (tie)
6. Ray Leonard—47 (tie)
8. Michael Spinks—45
9. Thomas Hearns—34
10. Donald Curry—26

1983 POLL
1. Marvin Hagler—147
2. Aaron Pryor—93
3. Larry Holmes—91
4. Michael Spinks—66
5. Jeff Chandler—57
6. Thomas Hearns—45
7. Alexis Arguello—29
8. Wilfredo Gomez—28
9. Hector Camacho—24
10. Eusebio Pedroza—12

1982 POLL
1. Ray Leonard—142
2. Alexis Arguello—97
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Salvador Sanchez—72
5. Wilfred Benitez—68
6. Larry Holmes—61
7. Jeff Chandler—25
8. Eusebio Pedroza—18
9. Aaron Pryor—17
10. Thomas Hearns—14 (tie)
10. Dwight Muhammad Qawi—14 (tie)

1981 POLL
1. Thomas Hearns—116
2. Ray Leonard—108
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Larry Holmes—75
5. Alexis Arguello—62
6. Wilfredo Gomez—58
7. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—28
8. Matthew Saad Muhammad—24
9. Wilfred Benitez—18
10. Roberto Duran—13 (tie)
10. Aaron Pryor—13 (tie)

1980 POLL
1. Roberto Duran—96
2. Ray Leonard—93
3. Wilfredo Gomez—88
4. Danny Lopez—65
5. Pipino Cuevas—54
6. Alexis Arguello—40
7. Larry Holmes—32
8. Wilfred Benitez—26
9. Vito Antuofermo—25 (tie)
9. Matthew Saad Muhammad—25 (tie)

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LUCIAN BUTE

The Most Popular Romanian In Canada

By Paul Salgado

When the Montreal-based promotional outfit Interbox fell into bankruptcy in 2004, the company's premiere boxer, Eric Lucas, promptly put together a group of investors and rescued the failing entity. Despite Lucas' noble efforts, differences among Interbox's executives had emerged, and the company's General Manager, Yvon Michel, had already determined he would strike out on his own and establish a new promotional enterprise. When Michel and Lucas sat down to discuss who among the fighters would remain with Interbox and who would go with Michel, Lucas kept matters simple: He only wanted to keep one fighter—Lucian Bute.

After sparring numerous rounds with Bute, a former amateur standout who had immigrated to Montreal from his native Galati, Romania, to launch his pro career, Lucas had come away impressed by his exceptional speed and skill. The young fighter had exhibited ability far superior to most seasoned pros, observed Lucas, who held the WBC super middleweight belt for three years, and he was certain Bute could similarly become a world titleholder. Still, considering Bute had at the time fought only a half dozen professional fights and had never been past three rounds, Lucas' plan to rebuild Interbox around such a green prospect had to be considered a high-risk venture.

Bute watches Andrade sink to the canvas after absorbing a fight-ending left hook to the body in the fourth round of their much-anticipated rematch. The imposing victory advanced Bute to the top spot in THE RING's super middleweight rankings.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Even though he is from Romania, the undefeated Bute has become a huge attraction in Quebec. All 16,000 tickets for the Andrade rematch were sold in less than an hour. The fight was also Bute's first appearance on HBO.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

In the end, Lucas' hunch ultimately proved prophetic.

Today, the 29-year-old Bute, 25-0 (20), is not only an undefeated standout in the same super middleweight class where Lucas reigned several years ago, he is THE RING's number-one contender and arguably the best 168-pounder in an era when the division's talent runs deep.

Bute's status in his adopted home city of Montreal is more akin to that of rock stars than prizefighters. And his defining one-punch, fourth-round kayo of nemesis Librado Andrade last November not only garnered a widespread audience in the U.S. on HBO, it proved a more impressive performance than any yet seen in Showtime's much heralded "Super Six" tournament, which was designed to showcase the division's best fighters.

Simply put, Bute is a superstar in Canada, poised to become a superstar on boxing's world stage. Had Bute chosen to leave his parents and four sisters in Romania for a different destination, he may not have encountered the same level of success.

Bute's introduction to Canada came in 2001 after he won gold at the Francophone games, culminating an amateur career that saw him compete in over 260 bouts. But it was Bute's connection to fellow Romanian boxers Leonard Dorin and Adrian Diaconu, who were already fighting in Canada with Interbox, that led to his decision to move to Montreal in 2002 and turn pro.

"I had offers from Germany and the United States, but I saw my friend Leonard Dorin's success and I thought this company in Montreal is quite good," recalled Bute, "so I thought I should go with them."

Although he quickly amassed a 15-fight kayo streak, few could have anticipated that Montreal fans would develop such an intense love affair with Bute. His two recent fights against Andrade have each drawn more than 16,000 fans, with the rematch selling out in less than an hour. Moreover, his chilling 11th-round kayo of Alejandro Berrio and 10-round drubbing of shopworn William Joppy each attracted upwards of 13,000 fans.

Handsome, charismatic, and unceasingly respectful, Bute has worked hard to engender the support of the sporting public in Quebec. Even so, longtime observers of his career remain hard-pressed to pin down exactly what it is

about Bute that has garnered such passionate support.

Russ Anber, host of the weekly boxing show, *In This Corner*, on Canada's all sports network TSN, believes it's a combination of qualities that attract people to the fighter.

"Bute has charisma," said Anber. "He's also humble, and he's worked hard coming here from Romania to earn what he has. And he's adapted to the language.

"He's also given Quebecers what they love in a fighter since the beginning of his career, which is all action from bell-to-bell, working hard, looking for the knockout. He's polite, never a trash talker. And he's always been grateful, thanking the people for coming out to his fights. He's a hard guy not to like."

Fightnews.com Canada editor Dave Spencer believes there is one more essential ingredient that has contributed to his success.

"Bute is a winner in a city starved for winners," said Spencer. "You look at boxing history in Montreal and it was a long time before they got someone with a world title belt. Eric Lucas exploded onto the scene briefly, and before him was Dave Hilton. But there has never been someone like Bute, no one good enough to be on Showtime or HBO, and people are excited about that."

Ironically, it was a result of Bute's debut on Showtime in his first bout against Andrade that he was ultimately excluded from the Super Six tournament, and eventually ended up on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*. Boxing often feeds off controversy, and Andrade's final round, final-seconds knockdown of Bute—and the atrocious bungling of the count by referee Marlon Wright—might have actually helped boost Bute's name recognition outside Canada.

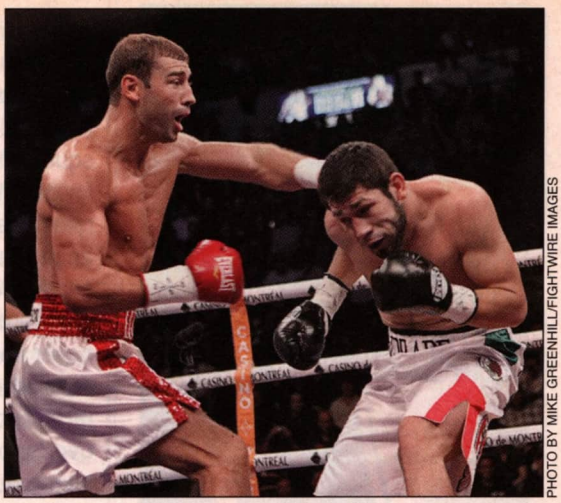

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Andrade was an easy target for Bute's precision punching, but unlike their first fight, the Mexican was unable to absorb the punishment. Although considered more of a boxer than a puncher, the victory was Bute's 20th knockout in 25 fights.

What the Bute camp neglected to disclose was the seriousness of his condition before going in the ring that night. According to his trainer, Stephane Larouche, prior to the bout Bute had been in Romania where he contracted food poisoning. Upon returning to Canada, he was prescribed antibiotics that caused a severe reaction, which resulted in bleeding of the stomach. Severely weakened, Bute was advised by doctors one month before the first Andrade match that it would be risky for him to fight.

"Lucian made the call," said Larouche. "He said: 'I still want to fight Andrade. I can outbox him over the 12 rounds. I'll be okay. Don't worry

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Although Andrade was able to survive a headshot early in the fourth round, he was unable to regain his feet in time to beat the count following Bute's debilitating left hook to the body. It was perhaps the most impressive victory of Bute's pro career.

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about it.' But Lucian lost nearly three kilograms (more than six pounds) one month before the first fight."

In order to assuage Bute's pride and squelch lingering questions it was more important for Bute to face Andrade again, rather than enter the Super Six. Although, according to the Bute camp, he was short-listed during the tournament's secretive development phase. Bute was never considered for the final cut, however, when it was understood he would face Andrade again, and the rematch overlapped with the scheduling of the tournament's stage-one bouts.

Ultimately, the anticipation surrounding the second Andrade bout proved far more exhilarating than the fight itself, although its conclusive finish supplied undeniable drama and intensified speculation as to how Bute would fare against his Super Six counterparts.

Similar to their first fight, southpaw Bute's skills were on display in rounds one and two as he boxed from long range, tagging Andrade, 31, with the jab and stepping side-to-side to open punching angles for his straight left leads.

As promised, Andrade, 166¾, started faster in the rematch, looking to cut off the ring and force Bute into exchanges at close quarters. Notably different this time, however, was Bute's ability to quickly push off Andrade, slide into mid-range, and fire off combinations.

Rounds one and two were an easy sweep for Bute, 166¾, but Andrade's pressure began to yield results in the third as he managed to clip Bute with several thudding rights and land hard to the body. It looked like Andrade was setting himself up to enjoy another late-round rally, but his intensified attack opened him up for the knockout that came suddenly in the next round.

"We knew Andrade would put on more pressure this time, and that's why we had the strategy of moving around him, but not too far out of distance," said Larouche. "By studying Andrade, I

PHOTO BY JAVIER CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Even though there is interest in Bute fighting the winner of Showtime's "Super Six" tournament, a match with local rival Jean Pascal (pictured) would be even bigger in Canada. Informed sources believe Bute-Pascal could be the largest moneymaker in the history of Canadian boxing.

saw that he actually keeps his balance by walking through straight punches, by absorbing them, and killing the snap. I told Lucian, if we use the hook, you can knock him out, so Andrade's aggression actually ended up helping us."

As Andrade pressed the action along the ropes midway into the fourth, Bute uncorked a left hook exactly as planned, catching the normally iron-jawed Andrade flush. For only the third time in his career, Andrade fell to the mat, but looked clear headed as he laid there propped up by his elbows and gave a wink to his corner indicating he was okay.

That Bute was able to land a number of searing punches when Andrade regained his feet suggested he might have been more rattled than was apparent. With no alternate plan, Andrade, 28-2 (21), simply chugged forward with more earnestness as Bute glided and pivoted around the ring, landing clean shots at various angles.

The fight-ending left hook to Andrade's midriff came as Bute lured him into the ropes and unleashed the punch with perfect placement and timing. Andrade collapsed on all fours, his forehead touching the canvas in prayer-like fashion as referee Benjy Esteves (USA), administered the 10 count at the 2:57 mark.

Inevitably, questions have proliferated over Bute's interest in joining the Super Six tournament, given the possible departure of Jermain Taylor, whose last-round defeat to Arthur Abraham marked his second brutal kayo loss in a row. With his high-profile win over Andrade, Bute believes there are now many options on the table for him and it is more logical that he fights the eventual tournament winner. Nevertheless, he has watched the tournament intently and has been surprised by some of the developments.

"I like the idea of it. It's an interesting tournament," said Bute. "I thought Taylor did well against Abraham, it was a competitive fight before he got knocked out. People thought he wouldn't be competitive at all.

"Ward was impressive in his fight against Kessler, though I thought Kessler would adapt. I knew he had some trouble with Joe Calzaghe, though, so I knew Ward's speed would give him trouble. But I thought Kessler would do something to neutralize it. Ward showed maturity and a good strategy. He stayed far from Kessler and clinched at the right times. It was a good performance."

For Bute, who is now learning English to broaden his appeal, meeting an A-list fighter before an American audience on HBO is his ultimate goal. As far as future opponents are concerned, Kelly Pavlik's name has been mentioned most frequently, but Chad Dawson and Bernard Hopkins are close enough in weight to present interesting possibilities.

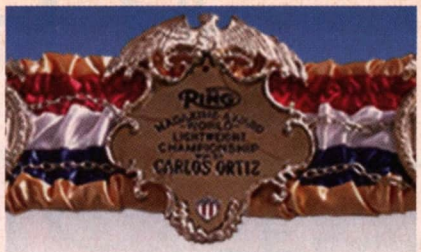
Larouche emphasizes that Bute is very comfortable as a super middleweight, and he believes Allan Green or Edison Miranda, (should he get by Robert Stieglitz) are also viable candidates. What is certain is that HBO has the checkbook to make at least one major fight happen for Bute, now that he has posted a signature win on the network.

Still, there remains one fight in Canada that could conceivably eclipse all others. Since grabbing the WBC light heavyweight title from Diaconu last June in a cross-town showdown, the brash and flamboyant Jean Pascal would present a perfect foil to the dignified Bute. According to Anber, while a compelling matchup for any boxing fan, the level of interest for such an event in Quebec would simply be off the charts.

"A fight with Jean Pascal would actually be bigger than any fight he could make in the super middleweight division. It would be the single biggest fight ever in Canadian history, even surpassing Sugar Ray Leonard and Roberto Duran. You could conceivably sell it at the Olympic Stadium, but if you held it at the Bell Centre ringside seats would go for $2,000 a pop. It would easily be the biggest-ever boxing event in this country. And it would make Jean and Bute more money than they could with any other fighter in the world today."

Regardless of the opponent, Bute is certain of one thing: His moment has arrived. Just as a discerning Lucas chose him five years ago, it has happened again. Only this time, it is destiny that has chosen him. ■

Paul Salgado is THE RING's Canada correspondent.



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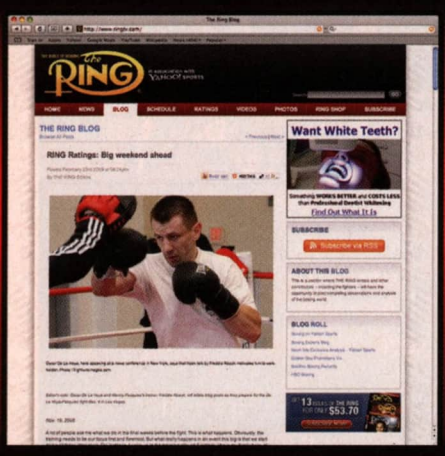

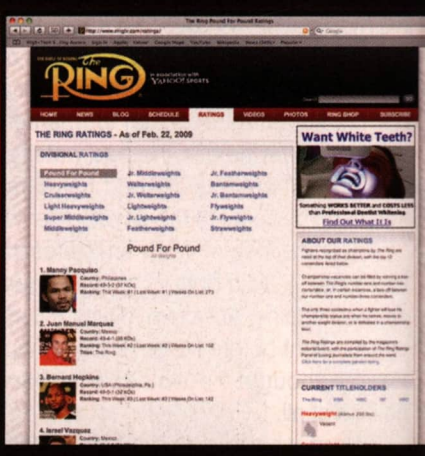

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THE 2000s: DIVISION-BY-DIVISION

Ranking The Superstars Of The Decade

By Eric Raskin

For a little perspective on how much can change in a decade, consider the following statements, all true 10 years ago: The Twin Towers were the tallest buildings in Manhattan; the only popular reality-TV shows were all on MTV; most people didn't know what Google was and nobody owned an iPod; and it was not outrageous to suggest Roy Jones was on his way to becoming the greatest boxer who ever lived.

It was a decade of tragic terrorist attacks, historic and heated presidential elections, tremendous television and mediocre movies, rapidly advancing technology, the curse of Babe Ruth falling, and the popularity of vampires rising. And in boxing, it was another decade filled with great athletes, memorable slugfests, assorted scandals, superstars getting old, new superstars emerging, ignoramuses insisting boxing is dead, and pay-per-view and live-attendance numbers repeatedly proving those ignoramuses wrong.

As the decade comes to a close, we're putting it in perspective as we did at the end of the last decade and the decade before that: by ranking the top fighters of the 2000s in each division. As was the case when this analysis appeared in sister magazine *KO* at the end of 1999, our criteria are longevity, accomplishment, talent, quality of opposition, and big-fight performance, all given equal weight. Though at first glance some criteria might appear more important than others, to place more weight on, say, longevity than quality of opposition would mean that a titlist who fought only undeserving mandatory challengers could rank higher than a true champion whose reign was relatively brief but contained victories over the best fighters the division had to offer.

There are other considerations that get factored in: Bonus points are awarded for extraordinary achievement, such as breaking a long-standing record or pulling off a major upset. Extra weight is also given to fighters who held THE RING championship, a possibility that didn't exist last decade.

As with any ratings-based endeavor, there are lots of tricky decisions involved, and it's important to note that just because Fighter A defeated Fighter B head-to-head, that doesn't mean Fighter A ranks higher. Maybe Fighter B was at the end of a long and illustrious career and Fighter A just caught him at the right time. Maybe that was the only good win Fighter A scored in the division all decade, whereas Fighter B had a great decade aside from that one fight. The point is, every fight matters, but no single fight ever tells the whole story.

If it's the whole story you're looking for, the next 18 pages should tell it pretty well. Just about every fighter who mattered in the 2000s is somewhere in these rankings. Just about every great fight that thrilled us as fans is referenced somewhere in this section. And it's not just a review of the decade; it's a comprehensive analysis of it. So turn the page and find out where your favorites ranked. And know that 10 years from now, these rankings will look very different and our world will be a very different place.

HEAVYWEIGHTS

1. **Lennox Lewis**
2. **Vitali Klitschko**
3. **Wladimir Klitschko**
4. **Chris Byrd**
5. **Hasim Rahman**
6. **John Ruiz**
7. **Oleg Maskaev**
8. **James Toney**
9. **Ruslan Chagaev**
10. **Alexander Povetkin**

We'll let you in on a little secret: The 2000s weren't exactly a heavyweight golden age. You could see it coming when the decade began, as the holdover superstars from the '80s and '90s, Evander Holyfield, Mike Tyson, and Lennox Lewis, were all entering their respective twilights. If boxing's so-called glamour division was to be healthy at decade's end, some new superstars were going to have to emerge over the next few years. Did it happen? The answer can be found in the fact that Lewis, who has been retired for the last 6½ years, is an easy choice for the number-one heavyweight of the decade.

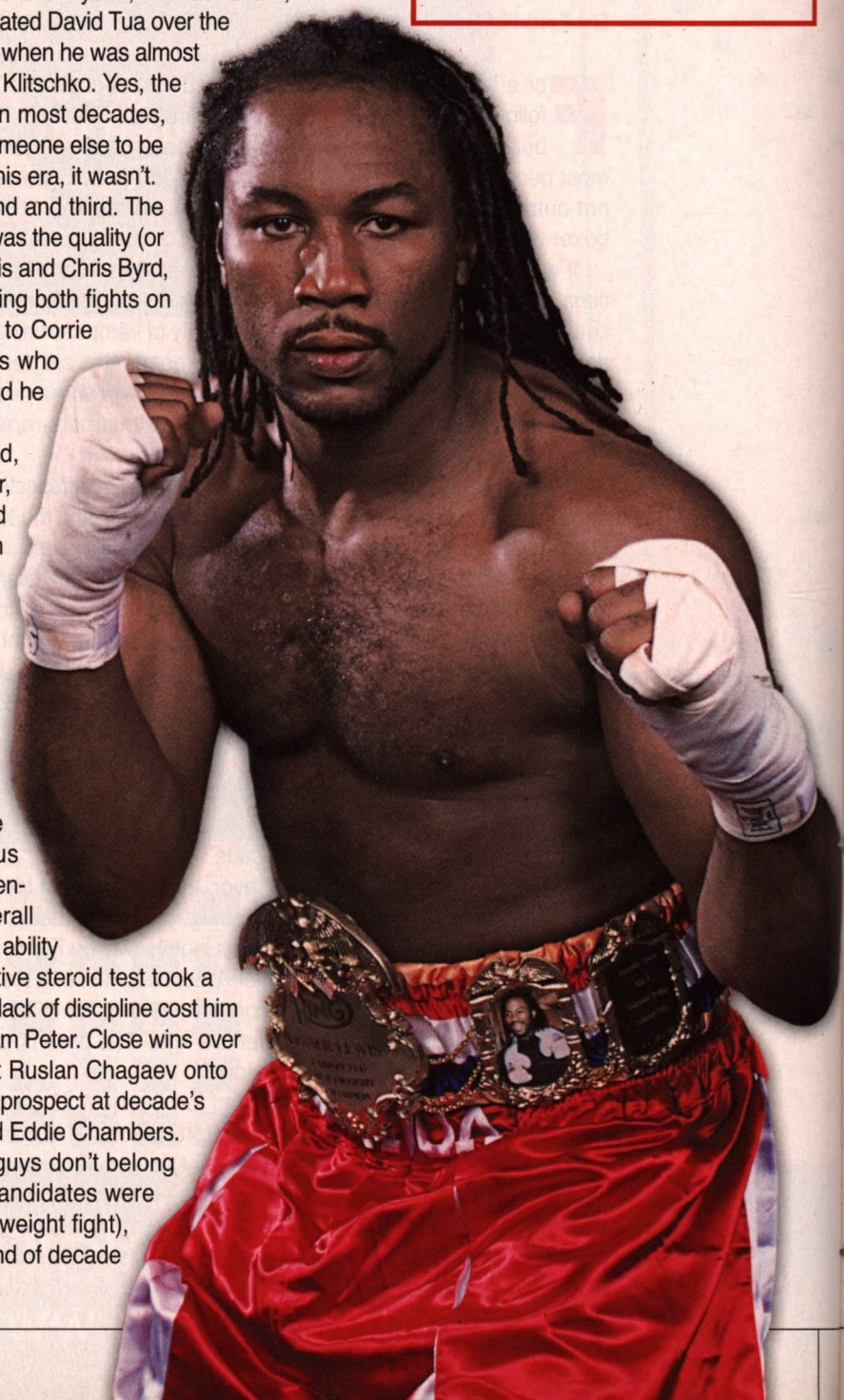
Hall of Famer Lewis fought only seven times in the 2000s, but his quality of opposition and quality of performance comfortably outdistance anyone else. He went 6-1 with five knockouts, including destructions of Tyson, Michael Grant, Hasim Rahman, and Frans Botha. He dominated David Tua over the distance and, importantly for these rankings, when he was almost used up, still had enough left to get by Vitali Klitschko. Yes, the knockout loss to Rahman is inexcusable. In most decades, that would be enough to open the door for someone else to be named Heavyweight of the Decade. But in this era, it wasn't.

The Klitschko brothers run a clear second and third. The determining factor in Vitali edging Wladimir was the quality (or lack thereof) of their losses. Vitali lost to Lewis and Chris Byrd, two elite fighters of the time, and was winning both fights on points before losing by TKO. Wladimir lost to Corrie Sanders and Lamon Brewster, two fighters who didn't come close to cracking this top 10, and he got splattered both times.

With wins over Vitali, Tua, and Holyfield, and no shameful defeats (two to Wladimir, one to Alexander Povetkin at age 37), Byrd is a clear choice for the fourth spot. Rahman had an extremely spotty decade, but a knockout win over Lewis for the undisputed championship goes a long way. John Ruiz did his best to ruin heavyweight boxing for all of us, but you can't deny that he got some good work done, beating the likes of Holyfield, Rahman, Fres Oquendo, Andrew Golota, and Kirk Johnson.

It's scary to see Oleg Maskaev's name so high, but he lurked as either a serious contender or a fringe contender almost the entire decade and put together a decent overall record of 18-5. James Toney surely had the ability to rank much higher than eighth, but a positive steroid test took a win over Ruiz off the board and his notorious lack of discipline cost him very winnable fights against Rahman and Sam Peter. Close wins over Ruiz and Nicolay Valuev are enough to get Ruslan Chagaev onto the list, while Povetkin—barely more than a prospect at decade's end—makes the cut with wins over Byrd and Eddie Chambers.

And before you insist that the last few guys don't belong in the top 10, consider that the next five candidates were Holyfield, Roy Jones (based on one heavyweight fight), Valuev, Peter, and Chambers. It was that kind of decade for the heavyweights.



CRUISERWEIGHTS

1. David Haye
2. O'Neil Bell
3. Jean-Marc Mormeck
4. Tomasz Adamek
5. Steve Cunningham
6. James Toney
7. Vassiliy Jirov
8. Guillermo Jones
9. Wayne Braithwaite
10. Virgil Hill

Deciding whom to include in this top 10 was easy; Juan Carlos Gomez came in at number 11 (all of his significant cruiserweight fights were in the '90s), and the drop-off after Gomez was steep.

Deciding how to rank the 10 fighters was nearly impossible; you could make a case for any of the top four (all RING champions) being number one, and you could probably come up with 50 different permutations of the list that would look reasonable.

All in all, this was the best decade yet for the cruiserweight division, as most of the top fighters fought each other, several of the fights were outstanding, and a few of the beltholders went on to make noise at heavyweight. Ever so narrowly, we selected David Haye as the top dog for the decade. He went 18-1 (17) as a cruiser, losing in '04 to Carl Thompson but bouncing back to win THE RING title by knocking out Jean-Marc Mormeck. The Brit also stopped Arthur Williams, Giacobbe Fragomeni, and Enzo Maccarinelli and exited the division as champion. He wasn't as dominant as Evander Holyfield in the '80s, obviously, but Haye was the closest thing to a dominant cruiserweight champ that we had in the 2000s.

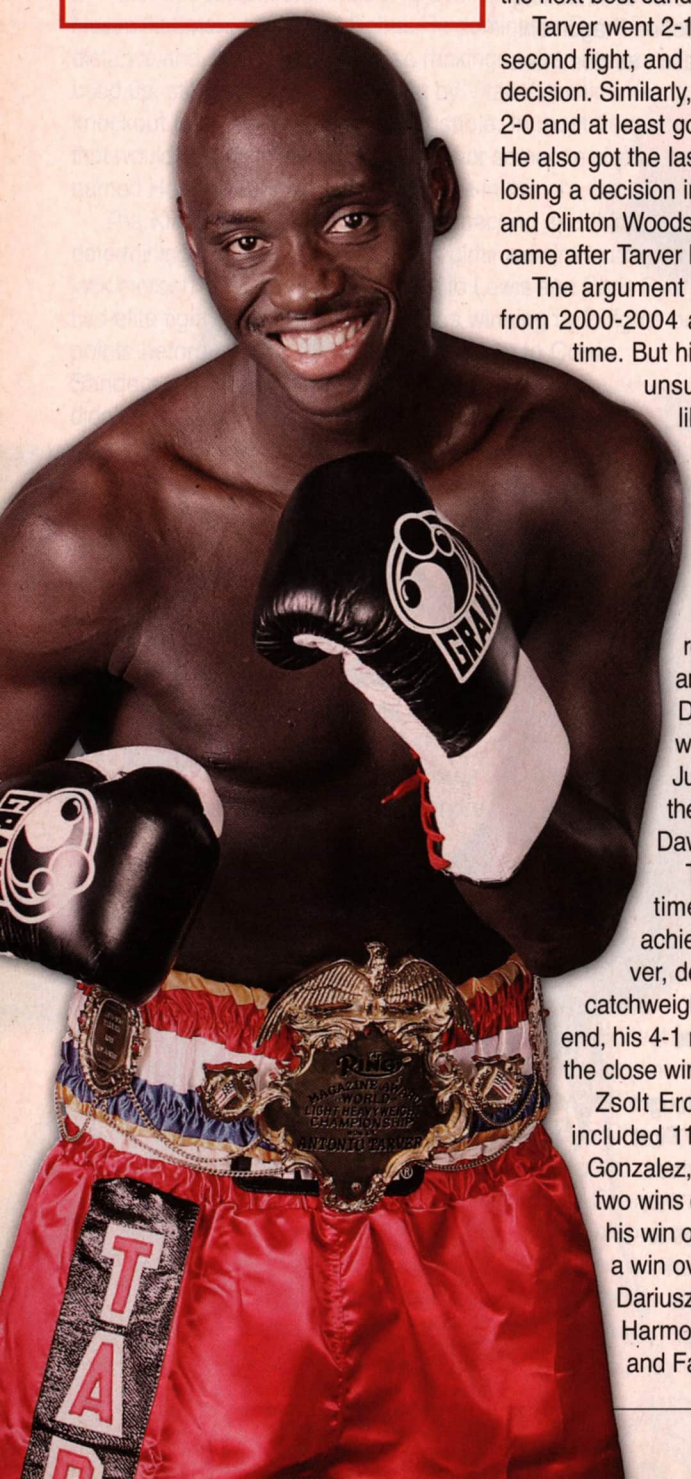
O'Neil Bell and Mormeck both fought a plethora of significant fights—including two against each other, with Bell winning the first by knockout and the Frenchman exacting revenge by narrow decision in the rematch. Bell also beat Jason Robinson, Williams, Kelvin Davis, Dale Brown (controversially), Ezra Sellers, and Sebastian Rothmann before beginning his decline and losing to Tomasz Adamek. It's an impressive resume, slightly better than Mormeck's two wins over Virgil Hill, kayo of Brown, decision over Wayne Braithwaite, and knockout loss to Haye.

Next up is another pair of rivals, Adamek and Steve Cunningham. Adamek boasts the close decision win in their '08 thriller and a knockout of Bell, whereas the Philadelphian claims the more extensive cruiserweight resume, including wins over Guillermo Jones, Davis, Braithwaite, Marco Huck, and Krzysztof Wlodarczyk. If there was a cruiserweight fight this decade that was better than Adamek W 12 Cunningham, it was James Toney W 12 Vassiliy Jirov, and they're the next two on the list. You could argue that Toney was the *best* cruiser of the decade, but he just doesn't have the stats to earn a top-five ranking, with Jirov and Robinson his only victims of note. And despite a lengthy alphabet reign that included six successful defenses (five in the '00s), Jirov is hurt by the fact that his best victories came against Julian Letterlough and Saul Montana.

Panamanian Jones, who lost a disputed decision to Cunningham, fought to a draw with Johnny Nelson, and kayoed Davis, Braithwaite, and Firat Arslan, was probably the most underappreciated cruiser of the decade. "Big Truck" Braithwaite looked for the first half of the decade like he was headed for big things, but he slowly unraveled with a string of losses to Mormeck, Jones, Maccarinelli, and Cunningham. Hill suffered his share of defeats in the '00s, going only 5-4 as a cruiser, but upset title wins in both 2000 and 2006, the latter at age 42, are noteworthy enough accomplishments to sneak "Quicksilver" into the top 10.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

1. **Antonio Tarver**
2. **Roy Jones**
3. **Chad Dawson**
4. **Glen Johnson**
5. **Bernard Hopkins**
6. **Joe Calzaghe**
7. **Zsolt Erdei**
8. **Clinton Woods**
9. **Eric Harding**
10. **Dariusz Michalczewski**



An interesting decade at light heavyweight, highlighted by major upsets in championship fights and a RING title lineage that went unbroken almost the entire 10-year period, leaves us with an assortment of conundrums regarding how to rank the fighters. Some fought elite competition, but suffered several losses. Some went undefeated at the weight, but either fought infrequently or fought flawed opposition. When it was all added up, we liked Antonio Tarver for the top spot.

"The Magic Man" won some and lost some, but he fought *everybody* (often multiple times), could blame a couple of his defeats on bad luck with judges, held the RING title twice, and got the better of his two chief rivals. Specifically, the fact that he owned Roy Jones was the key factor in propelling him to number one, since Jones was arguably the next best candidate for the top spot in these rankings.

Tarver went 2-1 against Jones, including an earth-shaking upset knockout in their second fight, and he could have easily been 3-0 since the first fight was a disputed decision. Similarly, he was 1-1 against Glen Johnson, but arguably should have been 2-0 and at least got the final word by outpointing the Jamaican in their second fight. He also got the last word against Eric Harding, knocking him out in five rounds after losing a decision in their first fight. Tarver also beat Reggie Johnson, Montell Griffin, and Clinton Woods, all of which helps offset two losses to Chad Dawson, both of which came after Tarver had grown old, and a one-sided loss to Bernard Hopkins.

The argument in favor of Jones is that he was clearly The Man in the division from 2000-2004 and was considered the pound-for-pound king for part of that time. But his losses were so disastrous and his trilogy with Tarver so clearly unsuccessful that it was hard to rank him number one. He beat the likes of Woods, Harding, Julio Gonzalez, David Telesco, and Felix Trinidad, but Jones lost brutally to Tarver and Glen Johnson and was embarrassed by Joe Calzaghe at age 39. Fortunately for him, at least for the sake of these rankings, his one-round loss to Danny Green in December '09 took place at cruiserweight and doesn't knock him down any additional pegs here.

Chad Dawson is an interesting case, since he posted a 13-0 record at light heavy but lacks a signature victory. He beat Tarver twice and Glen Johnson twice, but both were 39 or 40 when he fought them. Dawson also beat Harding and, in what probably is his most impressive win in retrospect, outpointed future cruiserweight king Tomasz Adamek. Just behind Dawson is Johnson, who tangled at the top level for most of the decade and went 1-1 against Tarver, 1-0 against Jones, 0-2 against Dawson, 1-0 against Harding, and 1-1-1 against Woods.

The next two fighters are tricky to rank because they're both all-time greats who won the true 175-pound championship but didn't achieve enough at the weight. Hopkins was masterful in upsetting Tarver, decisioned the smaller Winky Wright and Kelly Pavlik in 170-pound catchweight affairs, and lost by the slimmest of margins to Calzaghe. In the end, his 4-1 mark seems better than Calzaghe's 2-0 dossier, which consisted of the close win over Hopkins and the wide victory over Jones.

Zsolt Erdei had compelling numbers, with an unblemished record that included 11 WBO title defenses, but the best fighters he faced were Julio Gonzalez, Hugo Garay, and Thomas Ulrich. In the end, we'll take Calzaghe's two wins over Erdei's 27. Woods was a good measuring stick all decade and his win over Glen Johnson was a highlight, while Harding's highlights include a win over Tarver and a competitive loss to Jones. Rounding out the list is Dariusz Michalczewski, who kayoed the likes of Richard Hall and Derrick Harmon early in the 2000s before wearing down and losing to Gonzalez and Fabrice Tiozzo.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

1. **Joe Calzaghe**
2. **Sven Ottke**
3. **Mikkel Kessler**
4. **Lucian Bute**
5. **Andre Ward**
6. **Carl Froch**
7. **Anthony Mundine**
8. **Jeff Lacy**
9. **Byron Mitchell**
10. **Markus Beyer**

Some opinions are so universal and indisputable that they practically become fact. *Bob Marley is the best reggae artist ever. Albert Pujols is the best hitter in baseball today. Joe Calzaghe was the best super middleweight of the 2000s.* Technically, these are opinions, but is there really any argument? You'd have to be a lunatic to list anyone other than Calzaghe number one at 168 pounds for the past decade.

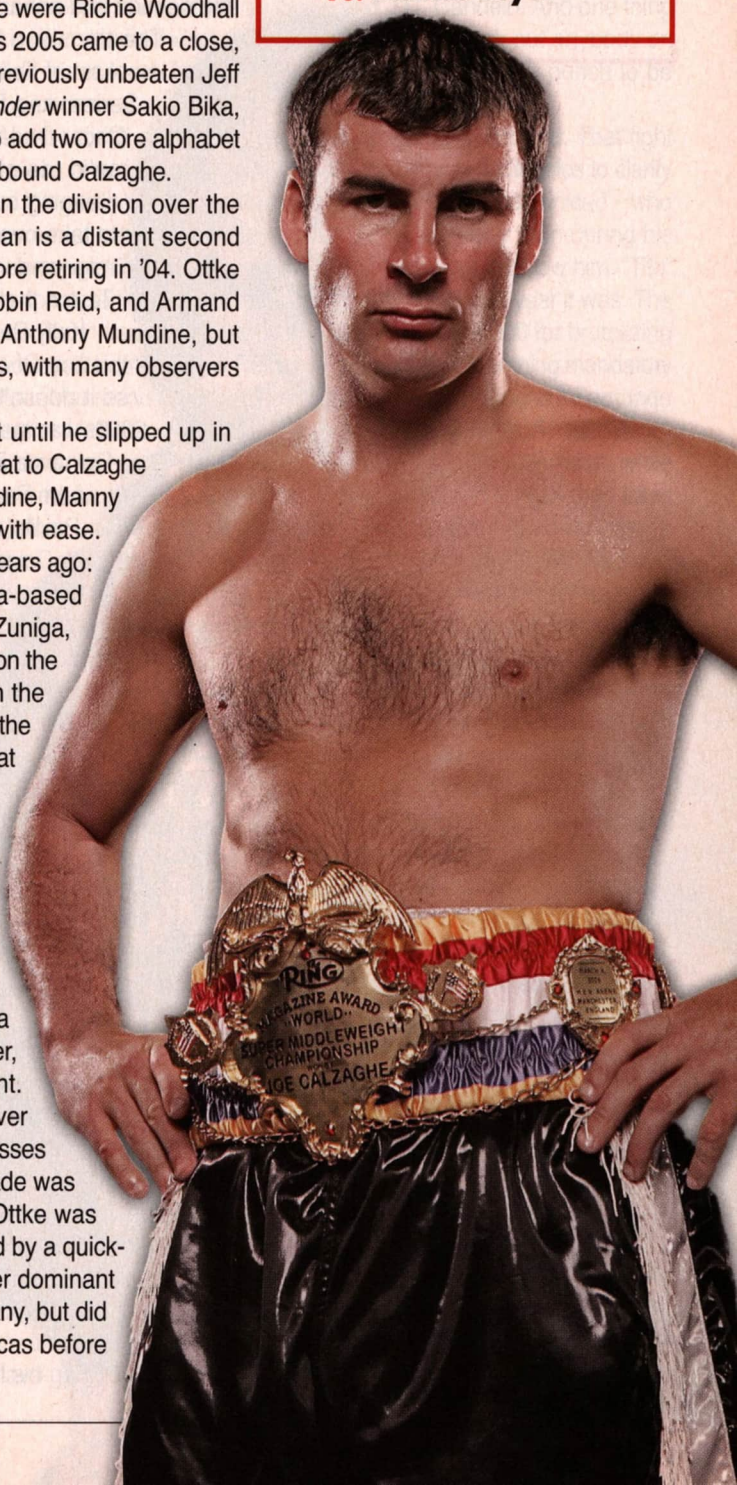
All the Welshman did was go 17-0, reign from the start of the decade until he left the division in 2008, hold all four "major" belts at one time or another, stand apart as RING champ for two years, and clean out the division before departing. Yes, much of his time from 2000-2005 was wasted against second-tier (or lower) foes. But he made up for it with what he did in '06 and '07.

Early in the decade, the best fighters on Calzaghe's resume were Richie Woodhall (KO 10), Charles Brewer (W 12), and Byron Mitchell (KO 2). As 2005 came to a close, his legacy was very much in question. Then he annihilated previously unbeaten Jeff Lacy to claim the vacant RING title, turned back future *Contender* winner Sakio Bika, and was brilliant in outpointing the undefeated Mikkel Kessler to add two more alphabet straps. At 168 pounds, the decade belonged to the Canastota-bound Calzaghe.

Interestingly, Sven Ottke posted the exact same record in the division over the course of the decade as Calzaghe did, 17-0. But the German is a distant second because he got there with a slew of hometown decisions before retiring in '04. Ottke outpointed Brewer, James Butler, Thomas Tate, Mitchell, Robin Reid, and Armand Krajnc, and scored a surprising come-from-behind kayo of Anthony Mundine, but several of those verdicts were disputed by the visiting fighters, with many observers considering the Reid fight an all-out robbery.

Kessler looked like he had a shot at the number-two spot until he slipped up in late-2009 and lost a one-sided fight to Andre Ward. Still, his defeat to Calzaghe two years earlier was no disgrace and he beat the likes of Mundine, Manny Siaca, Eric Lucas, Markus Beyer, and Librado Andrade, all with ease. Lucian Bute ends the decade where Kessler was a couple of years ago: undefeated and staking a claim to the top spot. The Canada-based Romanian holds wins over Bika, Alejandro Berrio, Fulgencio Zuniga, and Andrade (twice). Meanwhile, Ward is right on Bute's heels on the strength of his sensational upset victory over Kessler, though the 2004 Olympic gold medalist's resume still needs work. He has the Kessler and Edison Miranda wins, but it falls off steeply after that to the likes of Jerson Ravelo and Henry Buchanan.

Britain's Carl Froch is another fighter who emerged late in the decade, stopping a faded Reid, outpointing previously unbeaten Jean Pascal in a thriller, knocking out Jermain Taylor, and surviving Andre Dirrell via close decision. Mundine was among the more consistent forces over the course of the 2000s at super middleweight, posting a healthy 30-3 record with three wins over Sam Soliman, to the loss to Ottke, a victory over Antwun Echols, points defeats to Siaca and Kessler, and a triumph over Danny Green in an all-Aussie mega-fight. Lacy is constantly being reevaluated, but his knockout wins over Syd Vanderpool and Robin Reid get him in here despite bad losses to Calzaghe and Taylor. Mitchell's 168-pound record this decade was just 3-3, but he beat the dangerous Siaca twice, his loss to Ottke was questionable, and he floored Calzaghe before being victimized by a quick-trigger ref. Rounding out the rankings is Beyer, who was never dominant and sometimes benefited from hometown officiating in Germany, but did post a couple of wins over Green and a disputed win over Lucas before getting drilled by Kessler in '06.



MIDDLEWEIGHTS

1. **Bernard Hopkins**
2. **Kelly Pavlik**
3. **Jermain Taylor**
4. **Arthur Abraham**
5. **Winky Wright**
6. **Felix Sturm**
7. **Felix Trinidad**
8. **Harry Simon**
9. **William Joppy**
10. **Edison Miranda**

Maybe we should just pencil Bernard Hopkins in now for top middleweight of the decade honors at the end of 2019. Okay, that's a stretch, since he isn't a middleweight anymore and he'll be 54 years old heading into 2020. But it is quite a run he's had as the top 160-pounder two decades in a row—and it wasn't a difficult decision either time.

Interestingly, at the end of the '90s, the equivalent of this article in *KO* noted that while his body of work was more than enough to earn him the number-one spot, Hopkins didn't have a "chance to be recalled as a legend." *Whoops!* This decade, he broke records, established himself as one of the all-time great middleweights, and punched his ticket to the Hall of Fame, all before leaving the division midway through the decade and enhancing his legacy at higher weights.

The transition from titleholder to superstar was keyed by Hopkins' upset knockout of Felix Trinidad to complete the Middleweight World Championship Series, and B-Hop's star power grew when he became the first to kayo Oscar De La Hoya. He also stopped Antwun Echols and decisioned the solid trio of Keith Holmes, William Joppy, and Howard Eastman, fully cleaning out the 160-pound class until the next generation was ready to take over. And when that time arrived, Hopkins' 10-year, 20-defense reign ended with a highly controversial decision loss to unbeaten Jermain Taylor, then he lost the rematch in similarly unconvincing fashion.

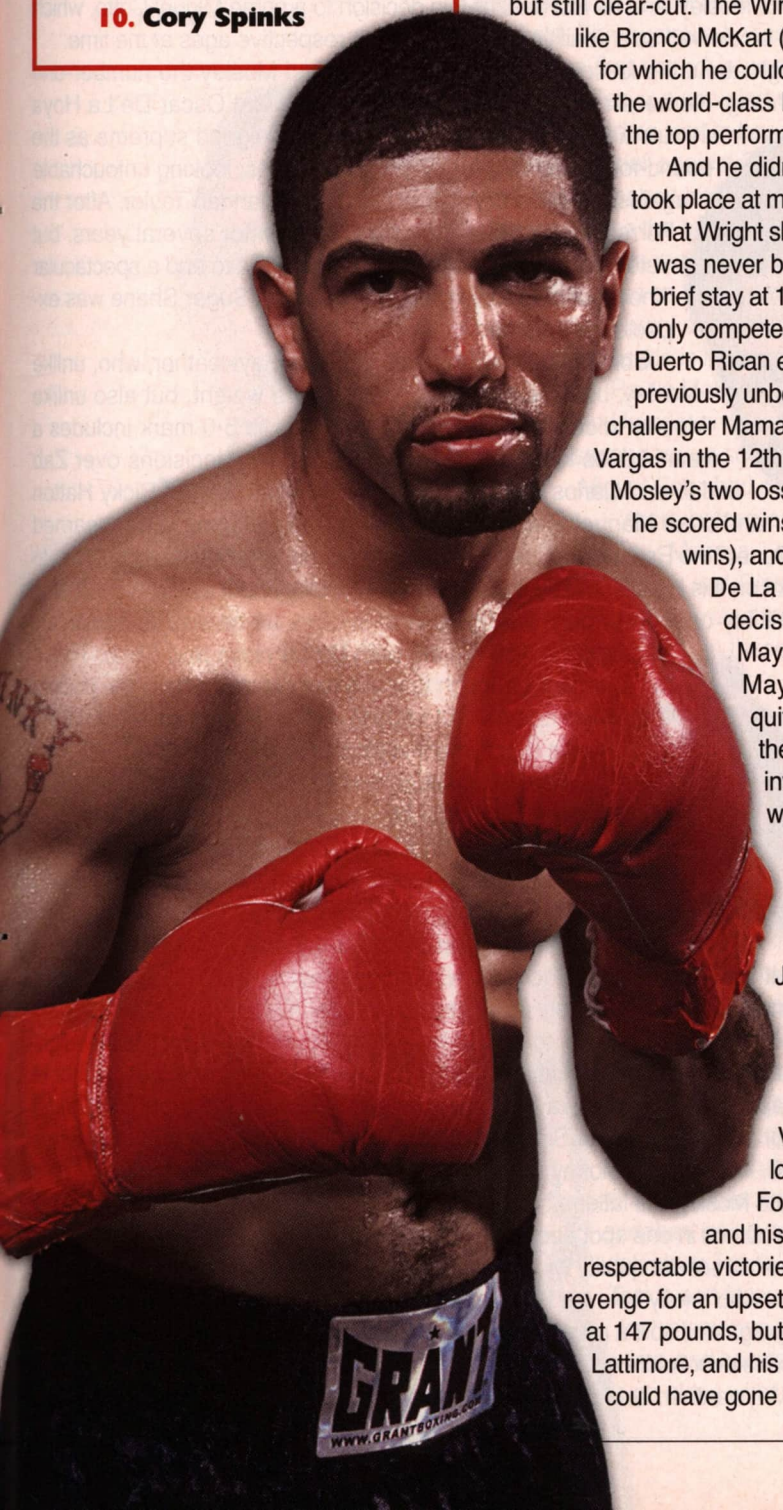
Kelly Pavlik just can't seem to get past Hopkins, either in real life or on this list. Of course, "The Ghost" lost to "The Executioner" at 170 pounds, so it doesn't count against him here, and his middleweight record in the 2000s was stellar: 19-0, with knockout wins over Taylor (to claim the RING title), Fernando Zuniga, Jose Luis Zertuche, and Edison Miranda. The man from whom Pavlik took his championship, Taylor, places next, having lost only to Pavlik (at least officially) while having faced a non-stop stream of world-class opponents including Hopkins (twice), Winky Wright (against whom he drew), Joppy, Kassim Ouma, and Cory Spinks.

Germany's Arthur Abraham went undefeated at middleweight this decade, but can't crack the top three because he didn't lay claim to the RING title and his best wins came against Eastman, Miranda, and Kingsley Ikeke. Wright's middleweight resume is decidedly different, with a modest record of 3-1-1 but with most of those opponents being top-rate. He blanked Trinidad and Ike Quartey, drew with Taylor (but probably deserved the win and the lineal title), and lost to Paul Williams as a 37-year-old.

Next come a pair of Felixes: Sturm, who had a tremendous 32-2 record at the weight this decade but never was in the discussion for best in the division; and Trinidad, who went just 2-2 but did score a spectacular win over Joppy to claim a belt and lost only to fellow pound-for-pounders Hopkins and Wright. Harry Simon was looking like a potential force, earning middleweight wins over Hassine Cherifi and Armand Krajnc before having his career derailed by legal problems while still unbeaten. Joppy came into the decade as one of the division's stars but morphed into little more than a name opponent, beating Cherifi and Eastman while losing to Trinidad, Hopkins, and Taylor. And Miranda edges Eastman for the final spot, thanks in large part to a seventh-round knockout in his head-to-head matchup with the serviceable Brit.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

1. **Winky Wright**
2. **Felix Trinidad**
3. **Shane Mosley**
4. **Oscar De La Hoya**
5. **Fernando Vargas**
6. **Sergei Dzindziruk**
7. **Daniel Santos**
8. **Kassim Ouma**
9. **Vernon Forrest**
10. **Cory Spinks**



It was a tale of 2½ decades at 154 pounds: From 2000 to about 2005, no division in boxing was more star-studded or gave us more major fights; from about 2006 on, aside from the fact that junior middle hosted the most financially successful fight of all-time (Floyd Mayweather vs. Oscar De La Hoya), 154 turned into a bit of a wasteland stuck between the more appealing welterweight and middleweight divisions.

By far the most consistent performer in this inconsistent weight class was Winky Wright, who went a perfect 9-0 and held THE RING title for a year before moving up to middleweight in 2005. The crafty veteran southpaw's signature wins were a pair of decisions over Shane Mosley, the first one dominant, and the second one closer but still clear-cut. The Winkster also posted solid wins over credible opponents like Bronco McKart (twice), Keith Mullings, and J.C. Candelo. And one thing for which he could be relied on was an inability to knock out anybody on the world-class level. No matter. Wright didn't need a big punch to be the top performer at 154 pounds over the last 10 years.

And he didn't need a big punch to defeat Felix Trinidad. That fight took place at middleweight, so it doesn't count here, but it helps to clarify that Wright should be number one at junior middle and Trinidad—who was never better in his Hall of Fame-bound career than during his brief stay at 154 pounds—should come in one notch below him. "Tito" only competed in the division for one year, but what a year it was. The Puerto Rican earned Fighter of the Year honors in 2000 for brutalizing previously unbeaten David Reid over the distance, starching mandatory challenger Mamadou Thiam in three rounds, and knocking out Fernando Vargas in the 12th round of one of the decade's most dramatic battles.

Mosley's two losses to Wright were his only defeats in the division, while he scored wins over De La Hoya (controversially), Vargas (two kayo wins), and Ricardo Mayorga (a memorable 12th-round stoppage). De La Hoya also lost only twice at the weight, the disputed decision to Mosley and the close points verdict against Mayweather, while memorably knocking out Vargas and Mayorga and outpointing Javier Castillejo. Vargas had quite a few losses at 154, posting a record of just 4-4 on the decade, but earns a top-five ranking because he was involved in several huge events and opened the decade with a tremendous win over Ike Quartey.

The lower half of the top 10 sees fighters with less star power but solid resumes just the same. Beltholder Sergei Dzindziruk never lost at the weight and scored points wins over Daniel Santos, Sebastian Lujan, and Joel Julio. Santos comes in next with losses to Dzindziruk and Yuri Foreman but wins over Antonio Margarito, Yory Boy Campas, and Joachim Alcine. Kassim Ouma flamed out quickly, but for a couple of years he looked like the future of the division, beating Alex Bunema, Verno Phillips (twice), Candelo, and Kofi Jantuah, before losing to Roman Karmazin and rapidly unraveling. Vernon Forrest was clearly better as a welter than he was at 154, and his decision over Quartey was unpopular, but he tallied respectable victories over Carlos Baldomir, Michele Piccirillo, and, to gain revenge for an upset loss, Sergio Mora. Cory Spinks also did his best work at 147 pounds, but at junior middle he outpointed Karmazin and Deandre Lattimore, and his lone loss in the division, to Phillips, was a decision that could have gone the other way.

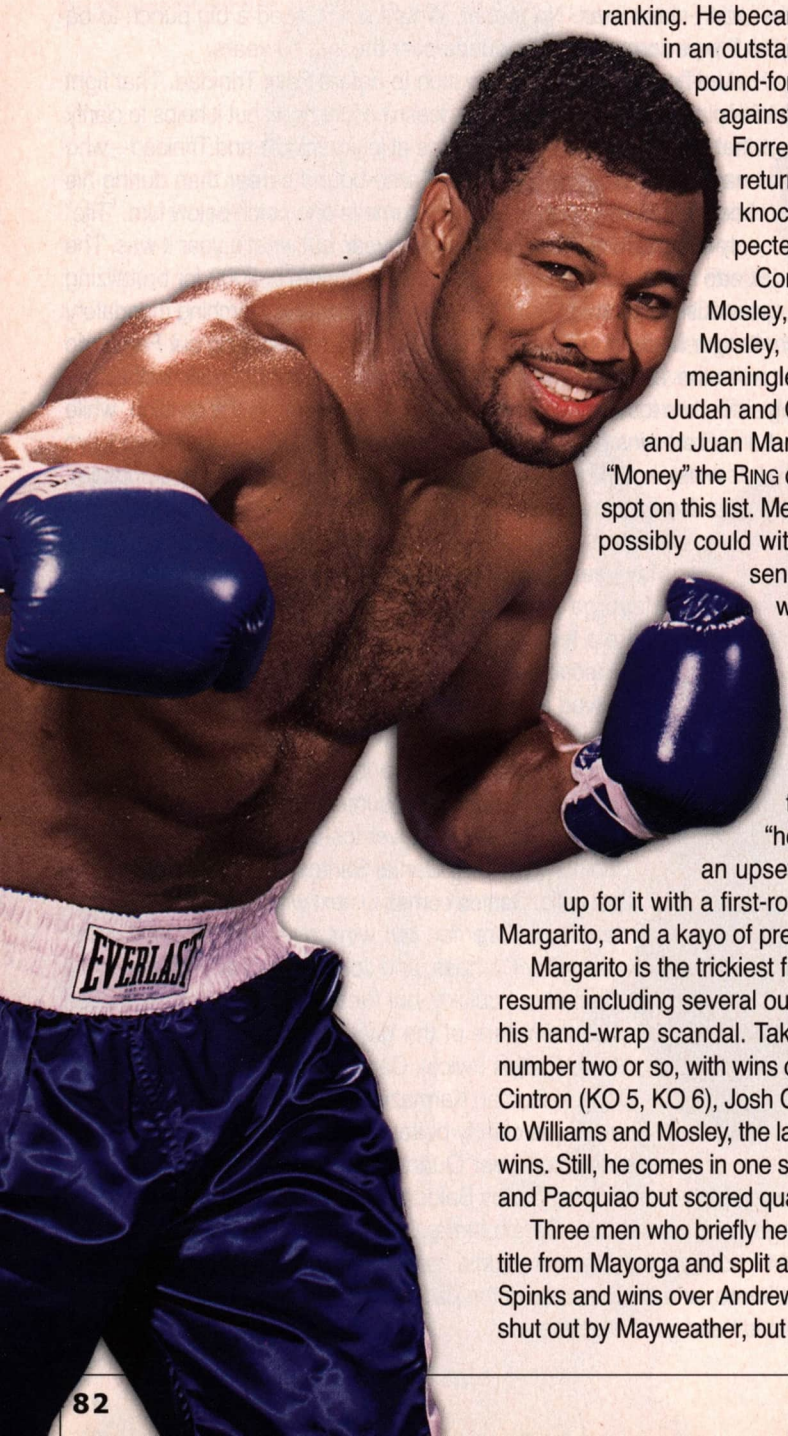
WELTERWEIGHTS

1. Shane Mosley
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Manny Pacquiao
4. Vernon Forrest
5. Paul Williams
6. Antonio Margarito
7. Miguel Cotto
8. Cory Spinks
9. Ricardo Mayorga
10. Carlos Baldomir

One of the criteria outlined in the introduction to this section is longevity, and is there anything that says "longevity" more distinctly than bumping off the number-one guy in the division in 2000 and then bumping off a different number-one guy in 2009? Sugar Shane Mosley had some struggles in between, but by becoming the top dog in the division on two separate occasions nine years apart, he clearly earns top-dog status for the decade.

Mosley's welterweight record was a not-quite-dominant 7-3, but none of the losses are serious black marks against him. He dropped two decisions to Vernon Forrest, a good fighter who, dating back to their amateur days, just had a style that proved nightmarish for Mosley. And he lost a razor-thin decision to a prime Miguel Cotto, which could almost be viewed as a positive result given their respective ages at the time.

But enough about the losses—it's the wins that earned Mosley the number-one ranking. He became the first fighter to clearly defeat Oscar De La Hoya in an outstanding battle back in 2000, then reigned supreme as the pound-for-pound king for the next 18 months, looking untouchable against the likes of Antonio Diaz and Shannan Taylor. After the Forrest losses, Mosley left the division for several years, but returned with a quality win over Luis Collazo and a spectacular knockout of Antonio Margarito in a fight Sugar Shane was expected to lose badly.



Coming in at number two is Floyd Mayweather, who, unlike Mosley, boasted a perfect record at the weight, but also unlike Mosley, didn't test himself fully at 147. His 5-0 mark includes a meaningless knockout of Sharmba Mitchell, decisions over Zab Judah and Carlos Baldomir, and wins over the smaller Ricky Hatton and Juan Manuel Marquez. Importantly, the Baldomir victory earned "Money" the RING championship, a key factor in his landing in the penultimate spot on this list. Meanwhile, Manny Pacquiao ranks about as high as a fighter possibly could with only two fights in a division, as he was destructively sensational in TKO-ing both De La Hoya and Cotto. Those wins were enough to make him number one in the current RING ratings, but looking at the decade as a whole, he ranks slightly behind Mosley and Mayweather.

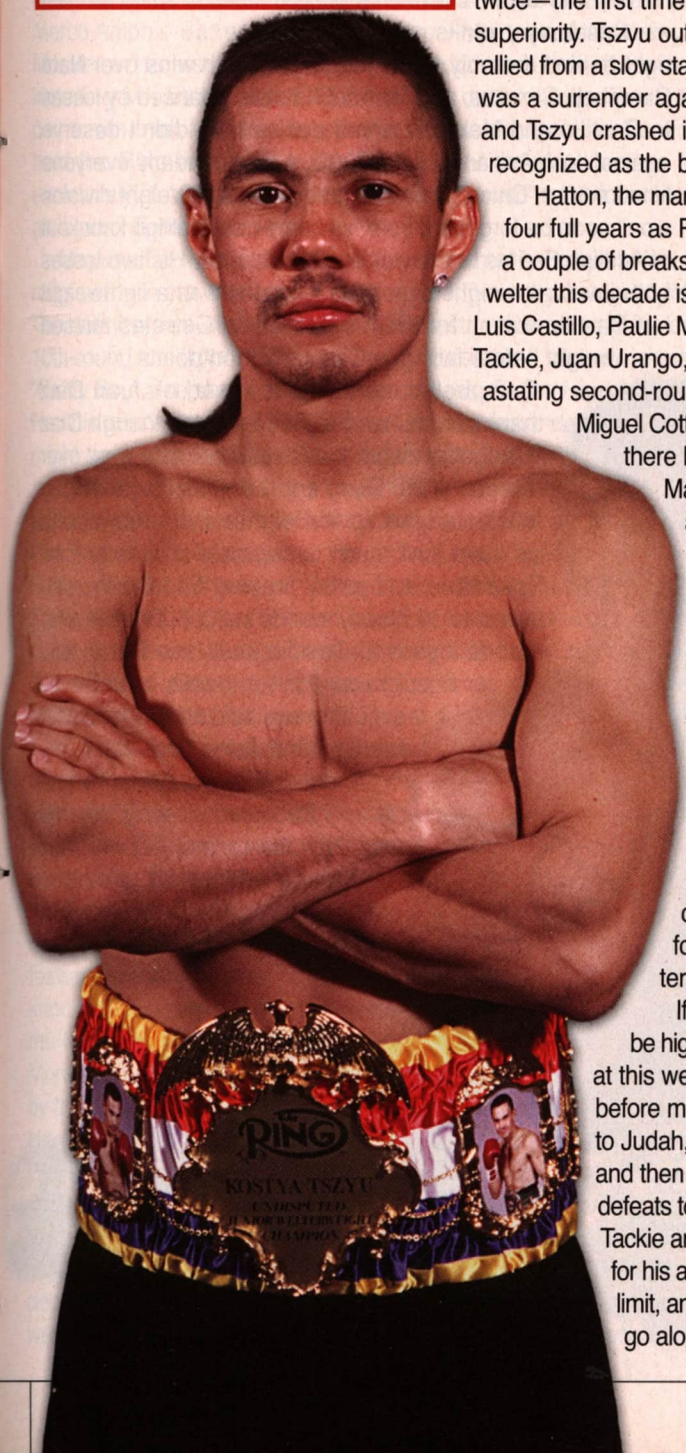
Forrest obviously had Mosley's number, but his welterweight resume otherwise was spotty. He decisioned Vince Phillips and Raul Frank while somehow losing twice to Ricardo Mayorga. Paul Williams also has one "how did that happen?" defeat on his 147-pound dossier, an upset decision to Carlos Quintana, but he more than made up for it with a first-round knockout win in the rematch, a close decision over Margarito, and a kayo of previously unbeaten Walter Matthysse.

Margarito is the trickiest fighter to rank, because he has an extensive welterweight resume including several outstanding wins, but much of it looks suspicious in light of his hand-wrap scandal. Take away the cheating element, and he might be ranked number two or so, with wins over Sergio Martinez (KO 7), Antonio Diaz (KO 10), Kermit Cintron (KO 5, KO 6), Josh Clottey (W 12), and Cotto (KO 10). But he also has losses to Williams and Mosley, the latter a brutal beatdown, and a shadow hangs over all of his wins. Still, he comes in one spot above rival Cotto, who was stopped by both Margarito and Pacquiao but scored quality wins over Mosley, Judah, Quintana, and Clottey.

Three men who briefly held the RING title round out the top 10. Cory Spinks took the title from Mayorga and split a pair of fights with Judah. Mayorga has the close defeat to Spinks and wins over Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis and Forrest (twice). And Baldomir got shut out by Mayweather, but first defeated Judah, Arturo Gatti, and Miki Rodriguez.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

1. Kostya Tszyu
2. Ricky Hatton
3. Miguel Cotto
4. Manny Pacquiao
5. Zab Judah
6. Timothy Bradley
7. Floyd Mayweather
8. Junior Witter
9. Sharmba Mitchell
10. Arturo Gatti



In his first fight of this decade, the number-one junior welterweight of the '90s, Julio Cesar Chavez, took on Kostya Tszyu. It was a mismatch, as we all knew it would be. Chavez had just turned 38, whereas Tszyu was in his prime. But it turned out to be a symbolically satisfying passing of the torch—not just from one great champion to another, but from the best 140-pounder of a decade to the best 140-pounder of the next.

Tszyu began the 2000s with easy wins over Ahmed Santos and Chavez, then he stepped up the competition, unified titles, eventually became the undisputed champ, and ruled this division forcefully from 2000-2005. The defining victory was his second-round knockout of Zab Judah to unify the three major alphabet belts and claim the RING title, and it seems crazy now, but Tszyu was actually regarded as the underdog in that fight. The Australia-based Russian also TKO'd slick titleholder Sharmba Mitchell twice—the first time due partially to injury, the second time due solely to pugilistic superiority. Tszyu outpointed sturdy challengers Oktay Urkal and Ben Tackie, and he rallied from a slow start to kayo respected veteran Jesse James Leija. The only blemish was a surrender against Ricky Hatton in '05, but everybody hits the wall sometime, and Tszyu crashed into it on that night at age 35. He never fought again—and to be recognized as the best 140-pounder of this decade, he didn't need to.

Hatton, the man who beat Tszyu, comes in a close second. He reigned for nearly four full years as RING champ, but it wasn't a very busy reign, as "The Hitman" took a couple of breaks to look ordinary at welterweight. Still, his 27-1 record as a junior welter this decade is impressive, and it includes the TKO of Tszyu, knockouts of Jose Luis Castillo, Paulie Malignaggi, and Carlos Maussa, and decisions over Vince Phillips, Tackie, Juan Urango, and Juan Lazcano, before it all came crashing down with a devastating second-round squashing at the hands of Manny Pacquiao.

Miguel Cotto had a tremendous run at 140 pounds also, posting a 23-0 mark there before leaving for the welterweight division. He beat Malignaggi, Maussa, Lovemore Ndou, DeMarcus Corley, Mohammed Abdullaev, and Ricardo Torres, but he never tangled with a top-five RING-rated foe. The junior welterweight experience of the next fighter in these ratings (Pacquiao) couldn't contrast more starkly with Cotto's. Pacquiao's quality of opposition and quality of performance were impeccable, but he fought at 140 exactly one time, blowing out Hatton for the RING championship.

Early in the decade, it looked like the future belonged to Judah, and since the Tszyu kayo was his only defeat at junior welter, he still manages a top-five ranking. He decisioned Junior Witter and Corley and kayoed Terronn Millett and Reggie Green, all quality wins. If Judah was flashy and volatile, the next fighter on the list is the picture of quiet stability. Timothy Bradley doesn't quite have Judah's athleticism, but he had the fundamentals and focus to put together an unbeaten record including wins over Witter, Edner Cherry, Kendall Holt, and Lamont Peterson.

If these rankings were about talent alone, Floyd Mayweather would be higher than number seven, but alas, he chose not to challenge himself at this weight, going 3-0 against Corley, Henry Bruseles, and Arturo Gatti before moving up to 147. Witter was also talented but inconsistent, losing to Judah, then beating Ndou, Andreas Kotelnik, Corley, and Vivian Harris, and then losing to Bradley and Devon Alexander. Mitchell suffered the two defeats to Tszyu, but otherwise went 6-0 in the division, including wins over Tackie and Ndou. And rounding out the field is Gatti, who gets partial credit for his amazing trilogy with Micky Ward a pound or two over the 140-pound limit, and boasts impressive knockouts over Millett, Leo Dorin, and Leija to go along with his shellacking at the hands of Mayweather.

LIGHTWEIGHTS

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
2. **Jose Luis Castillo**
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
4. **Joel Casamayor**
5. **Diego Corrales**
6. **Nate Campbell**
7. **Juan Diaz**
8. **Paul Spadafora**
9. **Leonard Dorin**
10. **Julio Diaz**

We should all be able to agree on what the best lightweight fight of the decade was: Diego Corrales KO 10 Jose Luis Castillo on May 7, 2005, at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. But who was the best lightweight fighter of the decade? The answer there isn't quite as simple. We saw several sure-shot Hall of Famers pass through, along with an assortment of guys who'll at least have their names on the ballot, but we never saw anyone dominate the division for a prolonged period of time (like, say, Shane Mosley did in the late-'90s), and in the end, any choice for the top spot feels somewhat flawed.

Our ultimate pick is Floyd Mayweather, whose lightweight resume is somewhat limited, but he has four things in his favor: He was unbeaten at the weight, he held THE RING title, he scored a pair of wins over one of the other fighters in the conversation for the top spot, and he definitely scores points in the talent category.

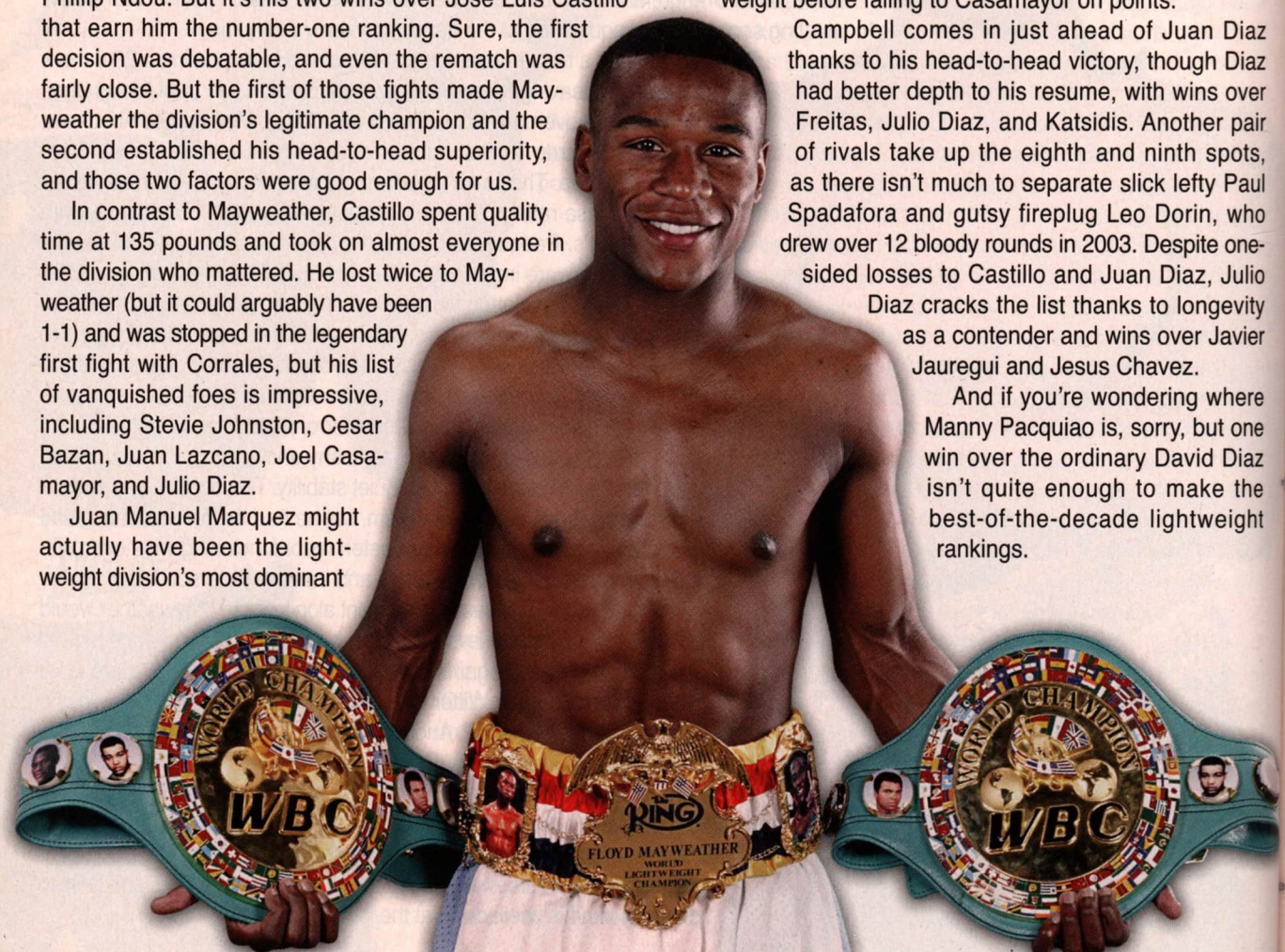
Among Mayweather's five wins in the division, three didn't mean a whole lot. He TKO'd Emanuel Augustus in an over-the-weight tune-up fight back when "Pretty Boy" was still competing at 130 pounds, he decisioned fringe contender Victoriano Sosa, and he annihilated the relatively unproven Phillip Ndou. But it's his two wins over Jose Luis Castillo that earn him the number-one ranking. Sure, the first decision was debatable, and even the rematch was fairly close. But the first of those fights made Mayweather the division's legitimate champion and the second established his head-to-head superiority, and those two factors were good enough for us.

In contrast to Mayweather, Castillo spent quality time at 135 pounds and took on almost everyone in the division who mattered. He lost twice to Mayweather (but it could arguably have been 1-1) and was stopped in the legendary first fight with Corrales, but his list of vanquished foes is impressive, including Stevie Johnston, Cesar Bazan, Juan Lazcano, Joel Casamayor, and Julio Diaz.

Juan Manuel Marquez might actually have been the lightweight division's most dominant champion, but with a skimpy 135-pound record of 2-0, he wasn't dominant long enough to rank higher than third on this list. Still, he was masterful in the ring, showing better-than-expected power and finishing ability to knock out both Casamayor and Juan Diaz. Casamayor ranks right behind the only man to kayo him, with wins over Nate Campbell, Corrales, and Michael Katsidis balanced by losses to Castillo and Marquez and a decision he didn't deserve against Jose Armando Santa Cruz. A rival of nearly everyone listed so far, "Chico" Corrales' time in the lightweight division won't soon be forgotten, from his come-from-behind knockout of Acelino Freitas to the war against Castillo. His two losses both involved weight issues, as Corrales was a lightweight but Castillo wasn't for their rematch and Corrales missed weight before falling to Casamayor on points.

Campbell comes in just ahead of Juan Diaz thanks to his head-to-head victory, though Diaz had better depth to his resume, with wins over Freitas, Julio Diaz, and Katsidis. Another pair of rivals take up the eighth and ninth spots, as there isn't much to separate slick lefty Paul Spadafora and gutsy fireplug Leo Dorin, who drew over 12 bloody rounds in 2003. Despite one-sided losses to Castillo and Juan Diaz, Julio Diaz cracks the list thanks to longevity as a contender and wins over Javier Jauregui and Jesus Chavez.

And if you're wondering where Manny Pacquiao is, sorry, but one win over the ordinary David Diaz isn't quite enough to make the best-of-the-decade lightweight rankings.



JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
2. **Floyd Mayweather**
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
4. **Acelino Freitas**
5. **Joel Casamayor**
6. **Diego Corrales**
7. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
8. **Erik Morales**
9. **Joan Guzman**
10. **Edwin Valero**

We often hear about the featherweight "golden age" we enjoyed during the 2000s, but junior lightweight might have been even more golden because all of those legendary 126-pounders passed through and were proceeded by a fairly outstanding crop of late-'90s holdovers who made their names at 130 and moved up just before the fantastic feathers invaded. The decade ended with a bit of a whimper at junior lightweight, but from 2000-2008, it could be argued that no division in boxing played host to more Hall of Fame-bound fighters or provided more memorable matchups.

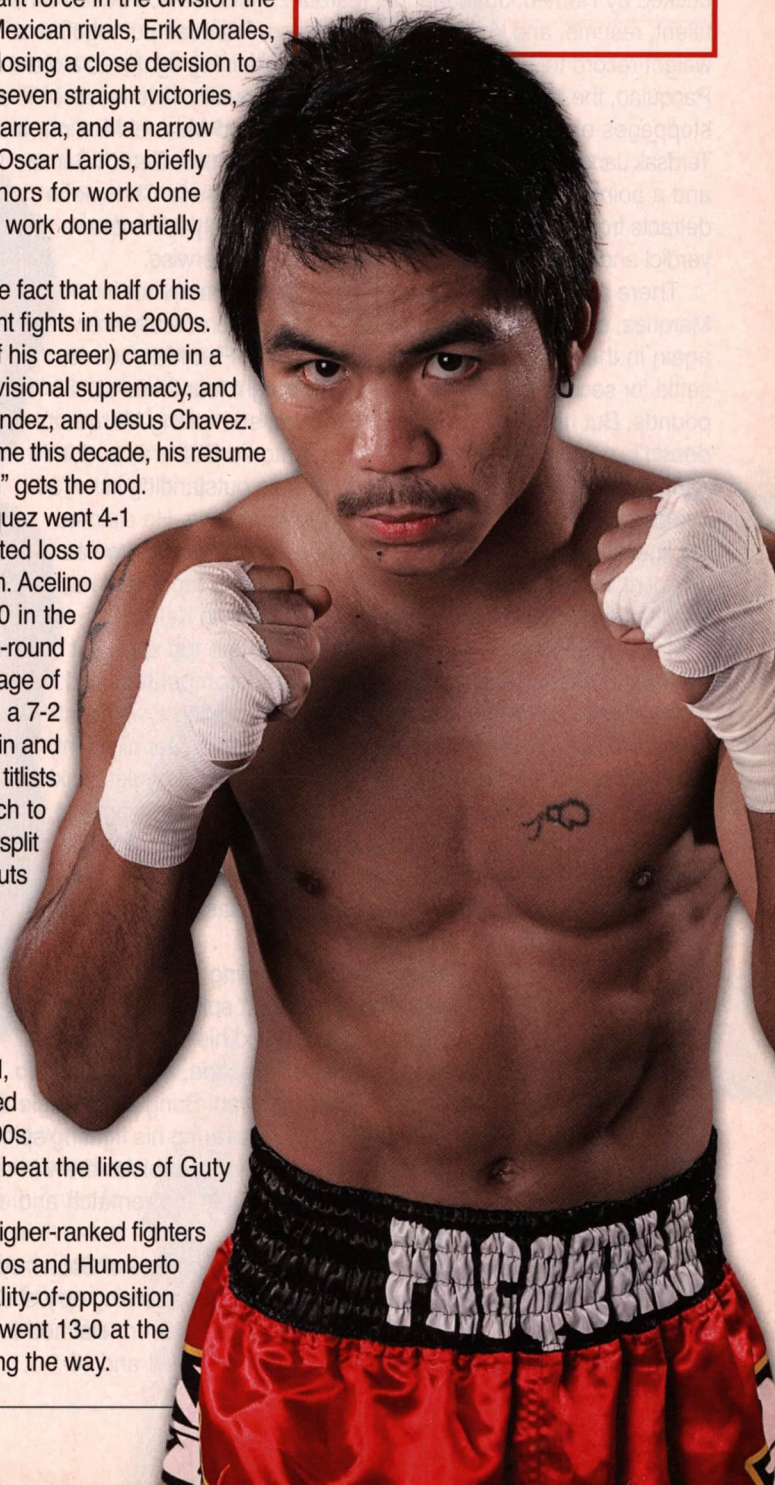
The discussion at the top resembles the overall "Fighter of the Decade" discussion, as real-life rivals-to-be Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather can each make a reasonable case for superiority. Pacquiao was the dominant force in the division the latter half of the decade, scoring wins over his three great Mexican rivals, Erik Morales, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Juan Manuel Marquez. After losing a close decision to Morales in his first fight at the weight, Pacquiao rattled off seven straight victories, including two knockouts of "El Terrible," a decision over Barrera, and a narrow points win over Marquez in a thriller. He also outpointed Oscar Larios, briefly held the RING title, earned 2006 Fighter of the Year honors for work done exclusively at 130, and captured the same award in '08 for work done partially as a junior lightweight.

Mayweather was just as dominant, but is hurt here by the fact that half of his reign came in the '90s and he only had four junior lightweight fights in the 2000s. The defining win (and probably still the best performance of his career) came in a 10th-round knockout of Diego Corrales to establish clear divisional supremacy, and "Pretty Boy" also easily handled Goyo Vargas, Carlos Hernandez, and Jesus Chavez. Had his wins over Angel Manfredy or Genaro Hernandez come this decade, his resume might have eclipsed Pacquiao's, but as it stands, "Pac-Man" gets the nod.

Even after the top two, the drop-off isn't very steep. Marquez went 4-1 with impressive wins over Barrera and Juarez and a disputed loss to Pacquiao that certainly doesn't count as a strike against him. Acelino Freitas was at his best at 130 pounds, where he went 9-0 in the 2000s including a close decision over Joel Casamayor, a one-round blastout of Javier Jauregui, and a stirring 12th-round stoppage of Jorge Barrios. Casamayor comes in just a hair behind with a 7-2 record that includes the loss to Freitas, a sixth-round TKO win and 12-round decision defeat to Corrales, and knockout wins over titlists Jong-Kwon Baek and Roberto Garcia. And there isn't much to separate "El Cepillo" from Corrales, who lost to Mayweather, split two bouts with Casamayor, and scored meaningful knockouts of Manfredy, Derrick Gainer, and Justin Juuko.

Barrera was better at 122 and 126 pounds than he was here, but he still compiled a 5-2 junior lightweight mark that featured a rubber-match points win over Morales, a quick knockout of Mzonke Fana, two decisions over Juarez, and the losses to Marquez and Pacquiao. Barrera's chief rival, Morales, put together a 6-3 record in this division, highlighted by the fact that he handed Pacquiao his only loss of the 2000s. He also lost twice to Pacquiao and once to Barrera and beat the likes of Guty Espadas Jr., Jesus Chavez, and Carlos Hernandez.

Talented Joan Guzman didn't have the mega-fights the higher-ranked fighters did, but he went 8-0 as a 130-pounder with wins over Barrios and Humberto Soto. And Edwin Valero really comes up short in the quality-of-opposition department, but sometimes numbers are enough and he went 13-0 at the weight with a tremendous run of first-round knockouts along the way.



FEATHERWEIGHTS

1. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
3. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
4. **Chris John**
5. **Erik Morales**
6. **Scott Harrison**
7. **Naseem Hamed**
8. **In-Jin Chi**
9. **Steven Luevano**
10. **Robert Guerrero**

Prince Naseem Hamed, who was ranked as the number-one featherweight of the '90s when we compiled these rankings 10 years ago, didn't quite leave the legacy he intended. He isn't remembered as an all-time great. He didn't scale the weight classes knocking everybody out. Perhaps unfairly, he's remembered as heavy on style and light on substance. But all that being said, he did leave a positive legacy in one sense: He single-handedly ushered in a new era for featherweights, both in terms of public appreciation and financial reward. And while he wasn't the best 126-pounder of the 2000s—wasn't even close, actually—the other big-name fighters in these rankings have him to thank for them becoming the stars they did.

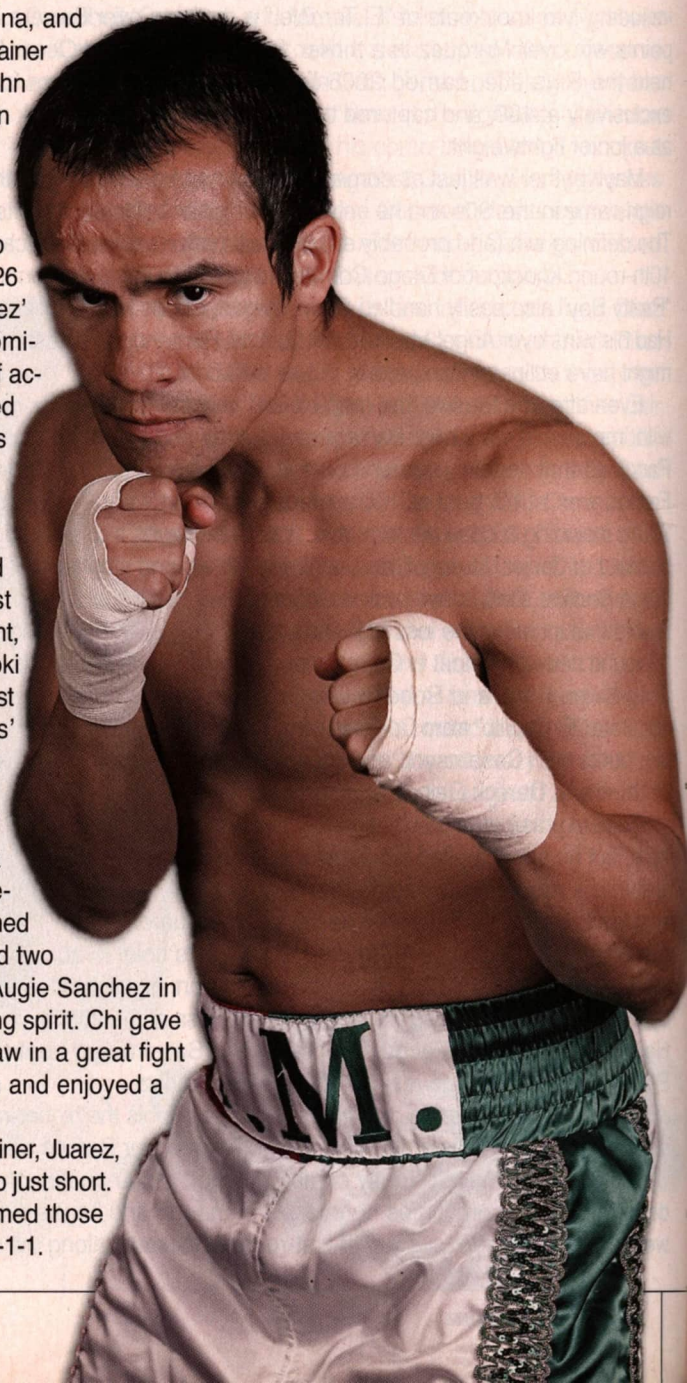
It was a tough call at the top, but the fighter who first made his name by being ducked by Hamed, Juan Manuel Marquez, gets the nod based on a combination of talent, resume, and longevity in the division. Marquez put together a 13-1-1 featherweight record this decade, and though the defining fight was a draw against Manny Pacquiao, the Mexican put together plenty of quality victories also. There were stoppages of Robbie Peden, the rarely kayoed Manuel Medina, and Terdsak Jandaeng, as well as a technical decision over Derrick Gainer and a points win over Victor Polo. A decision loss to Chris John detracts from the overall picture, but it was arguably a hometown verdict and Marquez' resume exceeds John's otherwise.

There obviously wasn't much to separate Pacquiao from Marquez, since they drew at featherweight and practically drew again in their junior lightweight rematch, but Pac-Man has to settle for second place because he only fought four times at 126 pounds. But his 3-0-1 record does include something Marquez' doesn't: a win over a legend, Marco Antonio Barrera, in dominant fashion. Barrera comes in next, with an outstanding list of accomplishments aside from the Pacquiao beatdown. He claimed the lineal title from Hamed in what was perceived at the time as an upset, he decisioned Erik Morales and Johnny Tapia, and he knocked out Paulie Ayala and a washed-up Kevin Kelley.

John's 29-0-2 record gives him a claim to the top spot, but he mostly missed out on the Hall of Fame competition and finished the decade presiding over one of boxing's weakest weight classes. The Marquez win is obviously his career highlight, followed by points wins over Derrick Gainer and Hiroyuki Enoki and a win and a draw (which should have been two wins) against Rocky Juarez. Speaking of questionable decisions, Morales' only loss at the weight was a disputed verdict to Barrera, and he posted wins against Kelley, Guty Espadas (with minor controversy), In-Jin Chi, and Ayala.

Scott Harrison was a steady performer, going 16-1-1 with a win over Wayne McCullough and a two-fight split against Medina, until his outside-the-ring problems ruined his career. Hamed was the reigning champ at the start of the decade, and posted two sensational fourth-round knockouts over Vuyani Bungu and Augie Sanchez in 2000, before losing to Barrera and never recovering his fighting spirit. Chi gave a gutsy effort in the loss to Morales, settled for a dubious draw in a great fight with Michael Brodie, then knocked Brodie out in the rematch and enjoyed a couple of alphabet title reigns.

The last two spots were really up for grabs, with the likes of Gainer, Juarez, Humberto Soto, Jorge Linares, and Yuriorkis Gamboa coming up just short. Instead solid titlists Steven Luevano and Robert Guerrero claimed those rankings with respective featherweight records of 13-0-1 and 16-1-1.



JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

1. **Israel Vazquez**
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
3. **Oscar Larios**
4. **Celestino Caballero**
5. **Juan Manuel Lopez**
6. **Mahyar Monshipour**
7. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
8. **Rafael Marquez**
9. **Toshiaki Nishioka**
10. **Paulie Ayala**

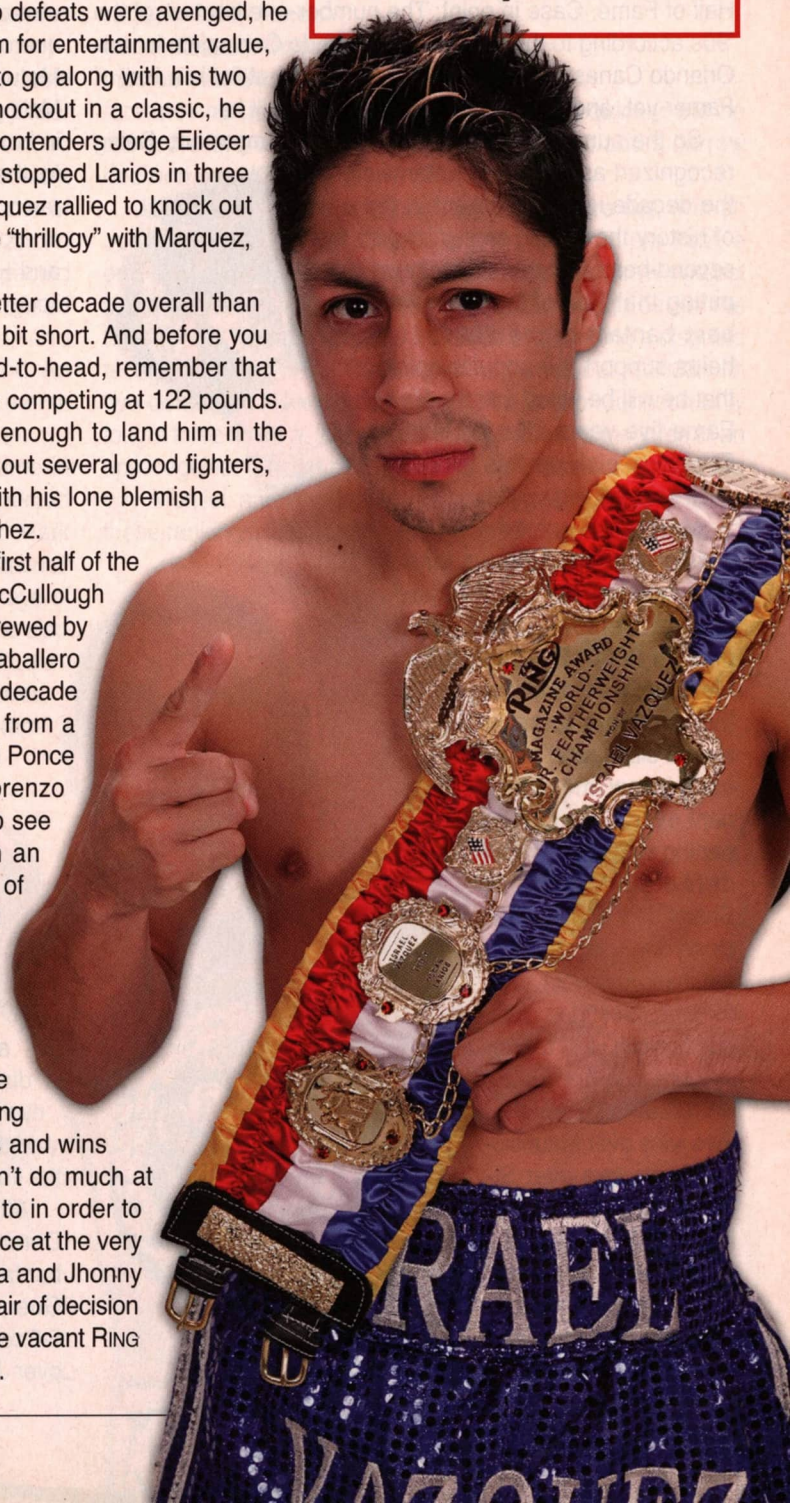
How's this for an indication of how much entertainment the 122-pounders provided this decade: No less than four of the 10 bouts named as Fight of the Year in the 2000s took place at junior featherweight. In 2000, it was Erik Morales-Marco Antonio Barrera I. In 2006, Somsak Sithchatchawal-Mahyar Monshipour was the top fight. In 2007, it was Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez II, and in '08, the third installment of Vazquez-Marquez was the year's finest battle. Yes, there are too many weight classes in boxing, and we probably don't need a division four pounds away from bantamweight and four pounds away from featherweight. But whether we need it or not, this decade, we liked having it.

The man who won two of those Fights of the Year, Vazquez, had the best all-around resume at 122 pounds in the '00s. His only two defeats were avenged, he held the RING title twice, and nobody came close to him for entertainment value, as he had three Fight of the Year honorable mentions to go along with his two winners. After losing to Oscar Larios by 12th-round knockout in a classic, he bounced back to win an alphabet title and defeat solid contenders Jorge Eliecer Julio, Jose Luis Valbuena, and Art Simonyan, then he stopped Larios in three rounds to claim the legitimate world championship. Vazquez rallied to knock out Jhonny Gonzalez in a dramatic battle, and then came the "thrillogy" with Marquez, of which Vazquez won the latter two.

Few will dispute that Manny Pacquiao had a far better decade overall than Vazquez, but at junior feather his resume falls a good bit short. And before you insist that Pac-Man would have beaten Vazquez head-to-head, remember that the Filipino was still a one-handed fighter when he was competing at 122 pounds. Regardless, his 9-0-1 record in the division is good enough to land him in the number-two spot of these rankings. Pacquiao knocked out several good fighters, including Nedal Hussein, Lehlo Ledwaba, and Julio, with his lone blemish a foul-filled technical-decision draw against Agapito Sanchez.

Oscar Larios had an outstanding run at 122 over the first half of the decade, beating the likes of Cesar Soto and Wayne McCullough (twice) while splitting a pair with Vazquez and getting screwed by the judges to split a pair with Willie Jorrin. Celestino Caballero picked up where Larios left off in the second half of the decade as the division's busy, talented beanpole, recovering from a couple of early-decade defeats to hand losses to Daniel Ponce De Leon, Valbuena, Somsak, Mauricio Pastrana, Lorenzo Parra, and Steve Molitor. It's a shame we didn't get to see Caballero against Juan Manuel Lopez, who began an overlapping alphabet reign with a one-round knockout of Ponce De Leon, then dominated Gerry Penalosa and showed heart to squeak by Rogers Mtagwa.

Monshipour was a fun titleholder for about three years, twice beating Salim Medjkoune before the pun ishing fights caught up with him against Somsak. Barrera did most of his best work in this division in the '90s, but he did post a 3-1 record at 122 this decade before departing in 2001, including a dubious decision loss to Morales and wins over Valbuena and Jesus Salud. Rafael Marquez didn't do much at 122 beyond his trilogy with Vazquez, but did he need to in order to crack the rankings? Toshiaki Nishioka emerged as a force at the very end of the decade, stopping the likes of Genaro Garcia and Jhonny Gonzalez. And Paulie Ayala takes the 10th spot with a pair of decision wins over Bones Adams, the second one earning him the vacant RING championship—which he unfortunately never defended.



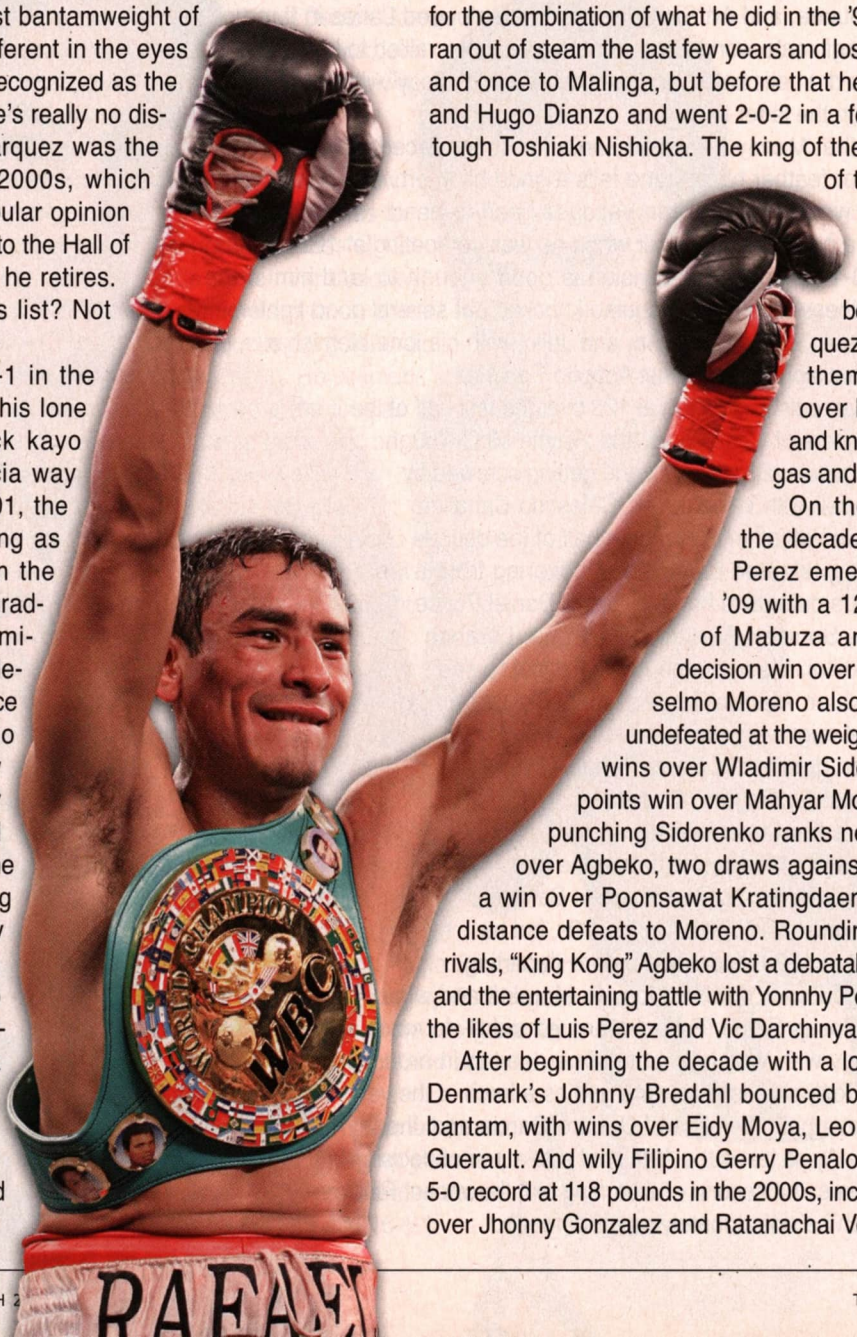
BANTAMWEIGHTS

1. **Rafael Marquez**
2. **Hozumi Hasegawa**
3. **Veerapol Sahaprom**
4. **Tim Austin**
5. **Yonnhy Perez**
6. **Anselmo Moreno**
7. **Wladimir Sidorenko**
8. **Joseph Agbeko**
9. **Johnny Bredahl**
10. **Gerry Penalosa**

It used to be that anyone from featherweight on down got shunned by the TV networks; that changed over the course of this decade, with so many of boxing's best talents and best matchups landing at 126 and 122 pounds. Now, bantamweight seems to be the new line of demarcation. It's not that you *can't* get on television, but it's definitely harder to get noticed or make six-figure paydays if you weigh 118 or less. And the less exposure you receive during your career, the less respect you'll get afterward. You really have to be the best of the best to make it to the Hall of Fame. Case in point: The number-one bantam of the '90s according to these rankings, Orlando Canizales, is now Orlando Canastota, but nobody else from that list is a Hall of Famer yet, and it's possible none of them will be.

So the number-one spot becomes very important. Being recognized as the best bantamweight of the decade is very different in the eyes of history than being recognized as the second-best. And there's really no disputing that Rafael Marquez was the best bantam of the 2000s, which helps support the popular opinion that he will be voted into the Hall of Fame five years after he retires. Everyone else on this list? Not such a sure thing.

Marquez went 14-1 in the division this decade, his lone loss coming by quick kayo against Genaro Garcia way back in 2000. By 2001, the Mexican was emerging as the dominant force in the weight class, and he gradually grew more dominant every year until departing in 2006. He twice defeated Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson, first by close decision, then by emphatic knockout, and then he ascended to the number-one RING ranking by upsetting previously unbeaten Tim Austin. Two wins over Mauricio Pastrana, two over Silence Mabuza, and a highlight-reel knockout of Heriberto Ruiz all served to put distance between Marquez and the rest of the pack.



Like Marquez, Hozumi Hasegawa's decade got off to a slow start, with losses in both his third and fifth pro fights. But he didn't lose again after that, claiming two victories over long-reigning titlist Veerapol Sahaprom and solid wins over Marquez-conqueror Garcia, Simone Maludrottu, and Vusi Malinga, ending the decade as the longest-reigning beltholder in boxing. Sahaprom, who might get some Hall consideration for the combination of what he did in the '90s and this decade, ran out of steam the last few years and lost twice to Hasegawa and once to Malinga, but before that he beat Adan Vargas and Hugo Dianzo and went 2-0-2 in a four-fight series with tough Toshiaki Nishioka. The king of the division at the end of the '90s, Austin put together five more successful alphabet title defenses before being stopped by Marquez in '03. Best among them were a decision over Ratanachai Vorapin and knockouts of Adan Vargas and Jesus Perez.

On the opposite end of the decade, unbeaten Yonnhy Perez emerged as a force in '09 with a 12th-round knockout of Mabuza and an outstanding decision win over Joseph Agbeko. Anselmo Moreno also ended the decade undefeated at the weight, with two decision wins over Wladimir Sidorenko and a close points win over Mahyar Monshipour. The light-punching Sidorenko ranks next with a close win over Agbeko, two draws against Ricardo Cordoba, a win over Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym, and the two distance defeats to Moreno. Rounding out this group of rivals, "King Kong" Agbeko lost a debatable one to Sidorenko and the entertaining battle with Yonnhy Perez, while defeating the likes of Luis Perez and Vic Darchinyan.

After beginning the decade with a loss to Paulie Ayala, Denmark's Johnny Bredahl bounced back to go 8-0 as a bantam, with wins over Eidy Moya, Leo Gamez, and David Guerault. And wily Filipino Gerry Penalosa posted a perfect 5-0 record at 118 pounds in the 2000s, including kayo victories over Jhonny Gonzalez and Ratanachai Vorapin.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

1. **Vic Darchinyan**
2. **Fernando Montiel**
3. **Masamori Tokuyama**
4. **Martin Castillo**
5. **Cristian Mijares**
6. **Alexander Munoz**
7. **Luis Perez**
8. **Nobuo Nashiro**
9. **Felix Machado**
10. **Mark Johnson**

Junior bantamweight is one of the few divisions in boxing that didn't have a RING champion at any point this decade. There was one brief moment when it seemed we were close, when Mexican fighters Fernando Montiel and Cristian Mijares emerged as the clear top two and the hardcore fight fans wanted to see them share the ring and fill the vacancy, but it never happened.

Appropriately, in a division in which we never had an undisputed leader all decade, we have no clear-cut number-one fighter for these rankings. It's a flip-a-coin two-man debate, but by the slimmest of margins, we're calling Vic Darchinyan the top 115-pounder of the '00s.

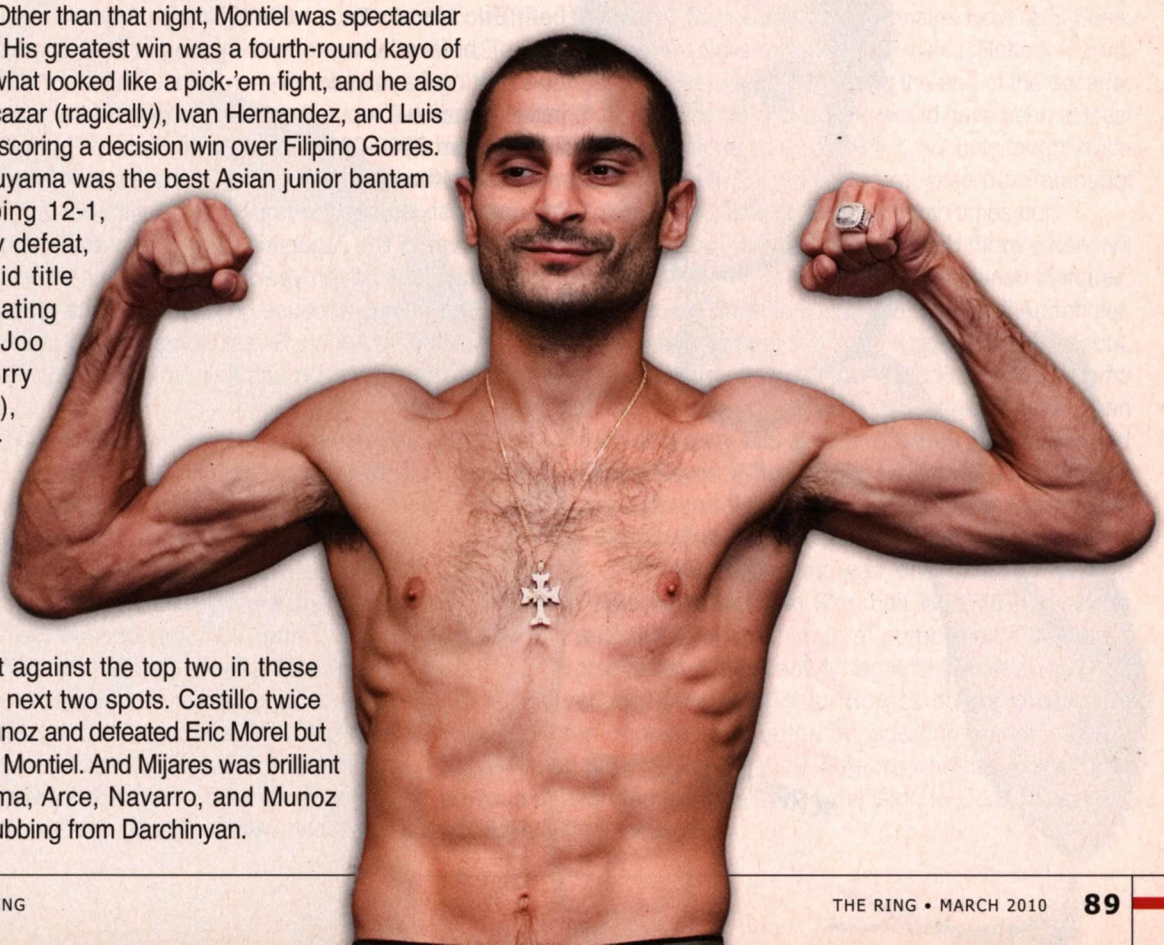
Darchinyan suffered two defeats this decade, but one came at flyweight and the other came at bantamweight. At junior bantam, the Armenian-Australian was undefeated. He settled for a draw against Z Gorres in the Philippines, and then went on a tremendous run of knockout victories against some of the division's best, including Dimitry Kirilov, Jorge Arce, and in "The Raging Bull's" crowning moment, Mijares. Most expected Mijares to box his way to victory, but Darchinyan surprised experts by beating Mijares with both vicious power and effectively awkward skill, stopping him in the ninth round. An explosive two-round blastout of Tomas Rojas in the final month of the decade helped lock up the top spot for Darchinyan.

Just a hair behind was Montiel, who spent more time in the division than Darchinyan, but did suffer one unexpected loss at the weight, a decision defeat to a slightly faded Mark Johnson in 2003. Other than that night, Montiel was spectacular all decade at 115. His greatest win was a fourth-round kayo of Martin Castillo in what looked like a pick-'em fight, and he also stopped Pedro Alcazar (tragically), Ivan Hernandez, and Luis Maldonado, while scoring a decision win over Filipino Gorres.

Masamori Tokuyama was the best Asian junior bantam of the 2000s, going 12-1, avenging his only defeat, enjoying two solid title reigns, and defeating the likes of In-Joo Cho (twice), Gerry Penalosa (twice), Katsushige Kawashima (twice), Kirilov, and Jose Navarro before retiring as a belt-holder. Two skillful Mexicans who came up far short against the top two in these rankings earn the next two spots. Castillo twice beat Alexander Munoz and defeated Eric Morel but was dominated by Montiel. And Mijares was brilliant against Kawashima, Arce, Navarro, and Munoz before taking a drubbing from Darchinyan.

Venezuelan Munoz, whose three losses all came against Castillo or Mijares, enjoyed a pair of alphabet reigns and defeated the likes of Kawashima, Hidenobu Honda, and Nobuo Nashiro. Nicaraguan Luis Perez had a disappointingly inactive title reign before moving up to bantamweight and fading quickly, but he did score two wins at 115 over Felix Machado and a narrow decision over Kirilov.

Japan's Nashiro was a tough fighter to figure out, with an upset win on cuts over Castillo in just his eighth pro fight, a one-sided loss to Munoz two fights later, and a draw against Hugo Cazares to close out the decade. Machado began the decade well, beating Mauricio Pastrana and winning a disputed technical decision over Castillo, but he flamed out in 2003 with two defeats to Perez. And though "Too Sharp" Johnson only fought three times at this weight, losing the last of the three in an upset against "Choko" Hernandez, he did defeat our number-two guy, Montiel, and that sneaks the best flyweight of the '90s into these rankings, just ahead of perennial bridesmaid Navarro.



FLYWEIGHTS

1. **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam**
2. **Nonito Donaire**
3. **Vic Darchinyan**
4. **Lorenzo Parra**
5. **Eric Morel**
6. **Omar Narvaez**
7. **Jorge Arce**
8. **Denkaosaen Kaovichit**
9. **Daisuke Naito**
10. **Takefumi Sakata**

What's in a number? In this age of alphabet-soup madness, it really depends. Contained amongst the 10 fighters rated as the best flyweights of the last 10 years are one who made a division-record 17 consecutive title defenses and another who has made 16 consecutive defenses and counting. One of them is ranked number one for the decade, while the other is only number six. You see, it's not only about the numbers. It's about whom you fought, how you performed, etc. In the end, numbers might help your cause a little, but they don't tell the whole story.

Thailand's Pongsaklek Wonjongkam is the fighter who set the record for flyweight defenses this decade, winning his belt in 2001 and keeping it until '07. He lost and drew against Daisuke Naito, but he also defeated Naito twice and beat everybody else with whom he shared the ring, including Malcolm Tunacao, Hidenobu Honda, a then-undefeated Hussein Hussein, and Julio Cesar Miranda. Pongsaklek never left Asia, which definitely counts against him, but he was extraordinarily active, was ranked number one by THE RING for about half the decade, and is still ranked number two as 2009 comes to a close.

Though Pongsaklek fought 30 times as a flyweight this decade and Nonito Donaire only had five fights at 112 pounds, there isn't a huge gap separating them in these rankings. The Filipino-American was simply brilliant in every appearance at this weight, most notably when he shocked Vic Darchinyan in 2007's Knockout of the Year and Upset of the Year. And all three of Donaire's title defenses ended inside eight rounds, with victims Luis Maldonado, Moruti Mthalane, and Raul Martinez sporting a combined record of 82-3-1 entering their fights with Donaire.

Donaire's predecessor Darchinyan is next with a 14-1 flyweight record, including knockouts of Wandee Singwangcha, Irene Pacheco, Maldonado, and Victor Burgos before Donaire erased him. Lorenzo Parra had a similarly dominant run that ended swiftly and suddenly. The Venezuelan beat Eric Morel, Yosam Choi, Brahim Asloum, and Takefumi Sakata (twice), before failing to making weight for his third fight with Sakata and getting kayoed in three rounds. The man against whom Parra initially made his reputation, '96 Olympian Morel, was the top dog in the division from 2000-2003, beating the likes of Sornpichai Pisnurachank, Denkaosaen Kaovichit, and Isidro Garcia before losing to Parra.

At number six stands the man with 16 alphabet defenses and counting, Omar Narvaez. The Argentine is unbeaten and has held the WBO strap for a ridiculous seven years, but he's never cracked the top three in the RING ratings because he has yet to face anyone ranked near the top. He beat Adonis Rivas, won and drew against Andrea Sarritzu, and outpointed Brahim Asloum, all of which gets him to number six, but no higher.

Jorge Arce had an exciting but relatively brief unbeaten run at flyweight, beating Hussein twice, Rivas twice, and a used-up Rosendo Alvarez. Denkaosaen rebounded nicely from his 2002 loss to Morel, going unbeaten the rest of the decade with a draw and a second-round kayo against Sakata and a win over Daiki Kameda. Naito, the only man to beat Pongsaklek this decade (he went 1-2-1 against him overall), split a pair of bouts against the brothers Kameda, beating Daiki but losing to Koki. And rounding out the top 10 is Sakata, who won some and lost some but can't be accused of ducking anyone. He drew with Naito, won one of three against Parra, split two fights with Roberto Vasquez, and went 0-1-1 against Denkaosaen.

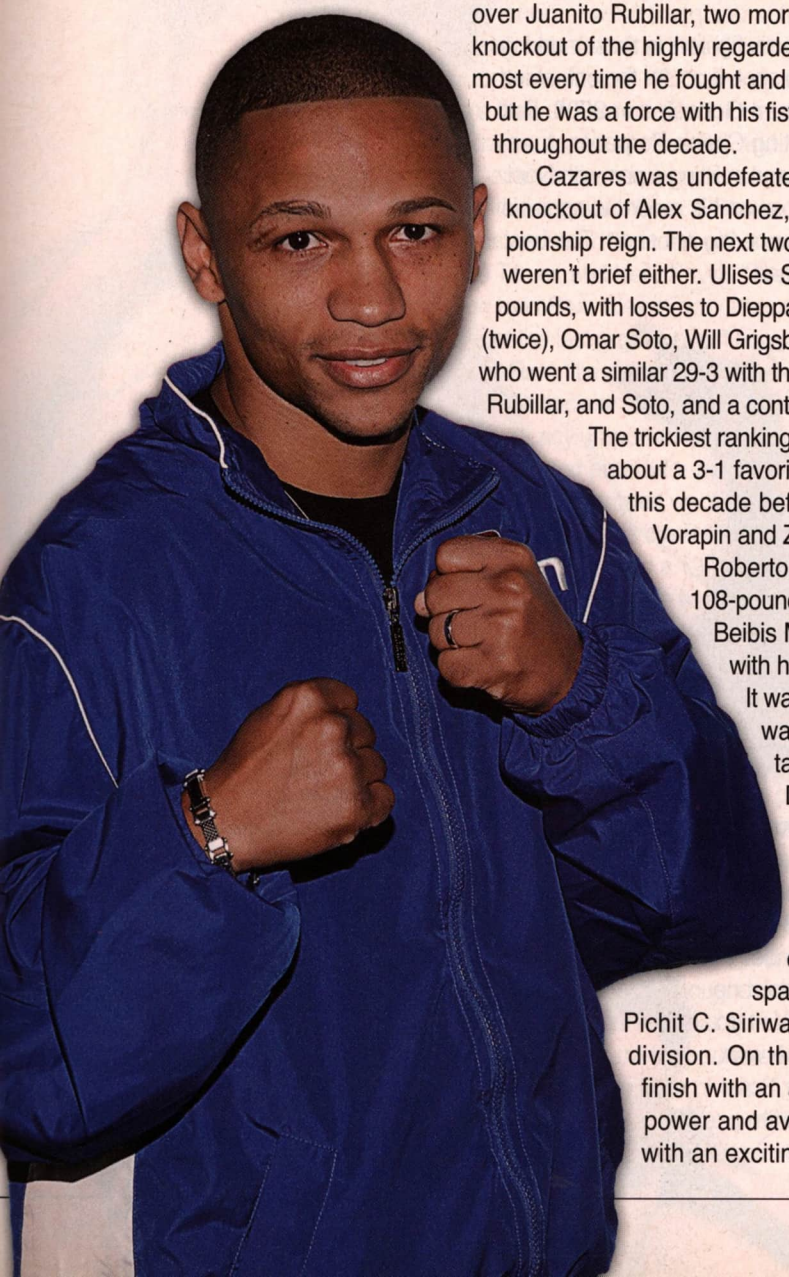
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

1. **Ivan Calderon**
2. **Jorge Arce**
3. **Hugo Cazares**
4. **Ulises Solis**
5. **Edgar Sosa**
6. **Ricardo Lopez**
7. **Roberto Vasquez**
8. **Nelson Dieppa**
9. **Rosendo Alvarez**
10. **Giovanni Segura**

One is a punchless, technically superb, undersized southpaw who produces exciting fights like MIT produces NFL draft picks. The other is a hard-hitting, wild-swinging, oversized righty who provided more action and blood this decade than Jack Bauer and Tony Soprano combined. Ivan Calderon and Jorge Arce couldn't have had more different junior flyweight experiences. But they're the clear top two 108-pounders of the decade, whichever order you want to put them in.

Calderon had a number of junior fly fights early in his career, then reigned at 105 pounds for about four years. When he moved up in 2007 and had his first significant fight as a junior flyweight, he went straight for THE RING champion, Hugo Cazares, and won a close but well deserved 12-round decision. "Iron Boy" backed it up with a narrow technical decision win in the rematch, outpointed decent challengers Juan Esquer and Nelson Dieppa, and had two head-clash-induced technical decisions against Rodel Mayol, winning one and taking a draw in the other. Calderon stands just 5' and has the power to score knockouts about as regularly as Halley's Comet comes around, but he has marvelous technical skills and his wins over the bigger, stronger, highly accomplished Cazares go a long way in these rankings.

Arce also enjoyed an undefeated decade as a junior fly, going 12-0 with two wins over Juanito Rubillar, two more over Melchor Cob Castro, and most importantly, a knockout of the highly regarded Yosam Choi. He could barely make the weight almost every time he fought and routinely came into the ring as a junior featherweight, but he was a force with his fists and was one of the most popular fighters in Mexico throughout the decade.



Cazares was undefeated aside from his two tangos with Calderon, with a knockout of Alex Sanchez, a pair of wins over Dieppa, and a brief RING championship reign. The next two fighters' reigns were not of the RING variety, but they weren't brief either. Ulises Solis put together a tremendous 26-2-1 record at 108 pounds, with losses to Dieppa and Brian Viloria countered by wins over Edgar Sosa (twice), Omar Soto, Will Grigsby (twice), Mayol, and Glenn Donaire. Next up is Sosa, who went a similar 29-3 with the losses to Solis, victories over Viloria, Roberto Leyva, Rubillar, and Soto, and a controversial kayo loss to Mayol at the end of the decade.

The trickiest ranking of all is Ricardo Lopez, who would have been at least about a 3-1 favorite over anyone else on this list, but only fought twice this decade before retiring in 2001. "Finito" knocked out Ratanapol Vorapin and Zolani Petelo, looking excellent both times out.

Roberto "The Spider" Vasquez had a much more extensive 108-pound resume, going 12-1 with wins over Marlon Marquez, Beibis Mendoza, Jose Antonio Aguirre, and Noel Arambulet, with his lone loss coming in a four-rounder in his pro debut.

It was a tale of two decades for Puerto Rico's Dieppa, who was outstanding until running into Cazares in '05, then tailed off quickly with additional losses to Calderon and Daniel Reyes. When Dieppa was going good, though, he defeated the likes of Solis, Fahlan Sakkreerin, Kermin Guardia, and Alex Sanchez.

Rosendo Alvarez was one of three men to hold the 108-pound RING belt in the '00s, which is enough to sneak him in at number nine despite a sparse resume. He went 2-1 against Mendoza, kayoed Pichit C. Siriwat, and drew with Victor Burgos before leaving the division. On the opposite end of the decade chronologically, we finish with an active titlist, Giovanni Segura, who has exceptional power and avenged his lone loss, a decision to Cesar Canchila, with an exciting knockout.

STRAWWEIGHTS

1. Ivan Calderon
2. Yutaka Niida
3. Oleydong Sithsamerchai
4. Eagle Den Junlaphan
5. Roman Gonzalez
6. Raul Garcia
7. Jose Antonio Aguirre
8. Muhammad Rachman
9. Noel Arambulet
10. Daniel Reyes

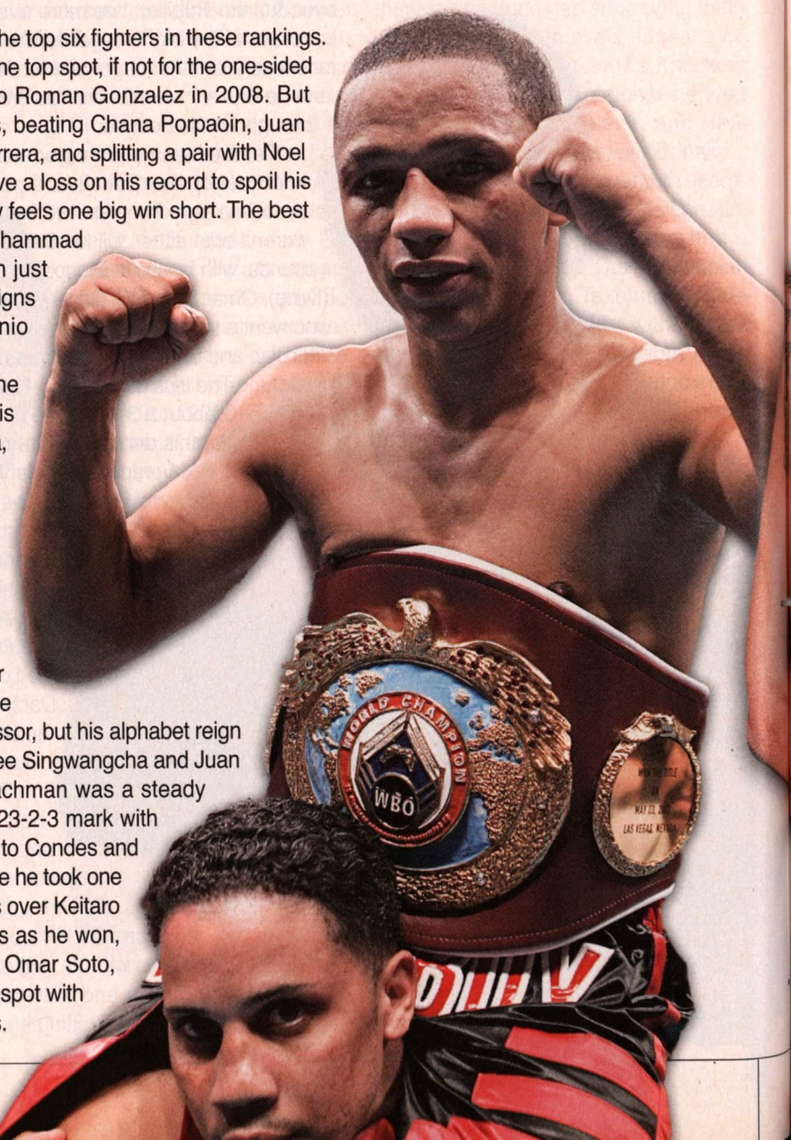
When we compiled these division-by-division rankings a decade ago, only one fighter was ranked number one in two separate weight classes: Pernell Whitaker, who was tops at lightweight and welterweight. In the 2000s, there was again only one fighter who pulled off that feat. However, let's not quite put Ivan Calderon on that "Sweet Pea" pedestal. For starters, ruling at 105 and 108 pounds, two divisions that didn't exist in the old days and are separated by about two Big Macs, isn't as meaningful as ruling at old-school weights 135 and 147. And secondly, Calderon was a debatable choice for number one in both divisions, whereas Whitaker was a close call at welter but a slam-dunk at lightweight.

Not to spend too much time knocking our number-one strawweight, but Calderon is awfully lucky Ricardo Lopez wasn't in this division anymore by the 2000s. Simply put, "Iron Boy" didn't have great competition for the top spot, and the level of opposition he faced is a major drawback. Still, the feather-fisted southpaw fought with tremendous skill and compiled a flawless 16-0 strawweight record, which is good enough to shade the other candidates. Calderon never took on a top 105-pounder who was in his prime, but his victories were almost all one-sided, with victims including past or future titlists Alex Sanchez, Roberto Leyva, Daniel Reyes, Isaac Bustos, and Ronald Barrera (all over the 12-round distance, of course).

Truthfully, there's not a lot to separate any of the top six fighters in these rankings. Yutaka Niida would have a decent argument for the top spot, if not for the one-sided nature of his fourth-round knockout title loss to Roman Gonzalez in 2008. But before that he enjoyed two alphabet title reigns, beating Chana Porpaoin, Juan Landaeta, Eriberto Gejon (twice), and Ronald Barrera, and splitting a pair with Noel Arambulet. Oleydong Sithsamerchai doesn't have a loss on his record to spoil his bid for the top spot, but the Thai's resume simply feels one big win short. The best names on it now are Eagle Den Junlaphan, Muhammad Rachman, and Juan Palacios. Eagle comes in just behind his conqueror Oleydong, with two title reigns to his credit and good wins over Jose Antonio Aguirre, Katsunari Takayama, and Rodel Mayol.

"El Chocolatito" Gonzalez is the number-one straw in the current RING rankings based on his spectacular domination of then-number-one Niida, but he unfortunately only has four strawweight fights to his credit. The last of the current titlists, Raul "Rayito" Garcia, has a longer track record and a 105-pound mark of 19-0-1, but the best of his wins—over Ronald Barrera (twice), Jose Varela (twice), and Florante Condes—don't compare with Gonzalez' drubbing of Niida.

The quality falls off somewhat with the lower four spots in these rankings. Mexican Aguirre was briefly thought the be "Finito" Lopez' successor, but his alphabet reign was undistinguished, including wins over Wandee Singwangcha and Juan Palacios and ending with a loss to Eagle. Rachman was a steady presence in the division all decade, posting a 23-2-3 mark with wins over Noel Tunacao and Reyes and losses to Condes and Oleydong. Arambulet gets into the top 10 because he took one of two from Niida and scored a pair of solid wins over Keitaro Hoshino. And Reyes lost almost as many fights as he won, falling to the likes of Calderon, Rachman, and Omar Soto, but he edges the other contenders for the 10th spot with knockout wins over Leyva and Edgar Cardenas.



POUND-FOR-POUND

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Joe Calzaghe
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Winky Wright
7. Shane Mosley
8. Marco Antonio Barrera
9. Rafael Marquez
10. Israel Vazquez

In the divisional rankings, bouncing around from one weight class to the next and stopping only briefly at each weight hurts a fighter's standing. But in the pound-for-pound rankings, it's encouraged. The more divisions you excelled in, the more credit you receive here. And both the number-one and number-two fighters of the 2000s definitely don't lack for divisions in which they excelled.

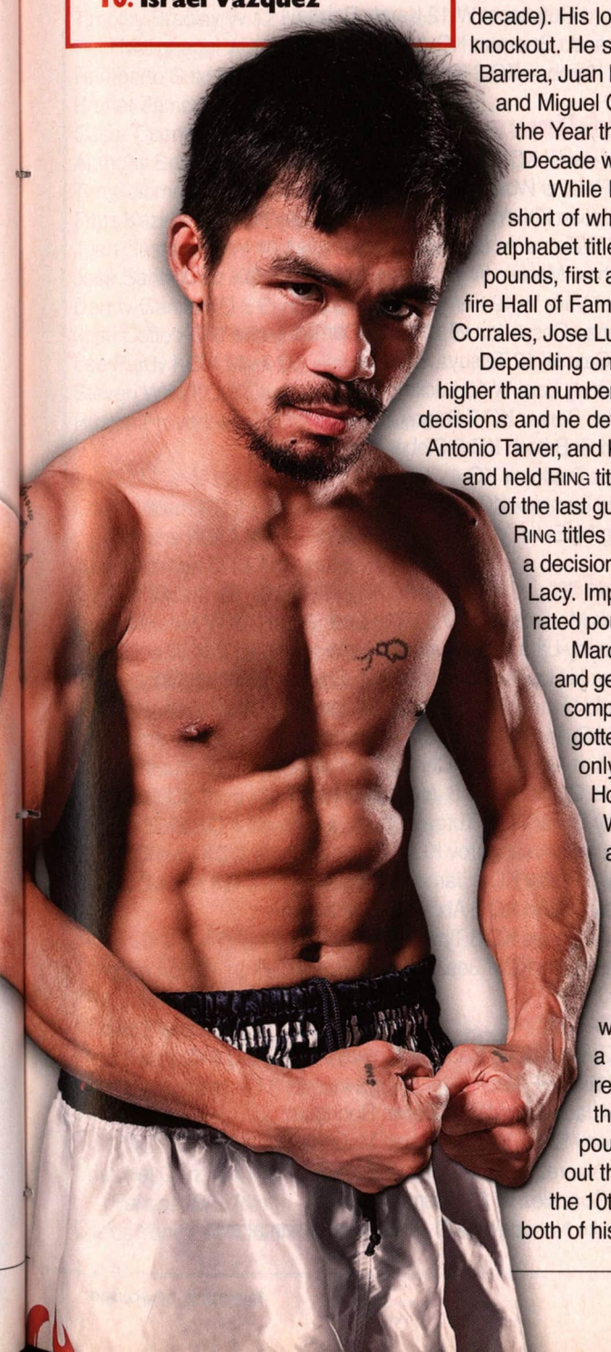
As far as we're concerned, Manny Pacquiao is the only choice for number one. In terms of quality of opposition and success across a broad spectrum of weights, nobody else comes close. Here's where he ranked in this section: second at 122 pounds, second at 126, first at 130, fourth at 140, and third at 147. "Pac-Man" went 23-1-2 over the '00s, winning titles in six divisions and RING titles in three (both high marks for the decade). His lone loss, a close decision against Erik Morales, was twice avenged by knockout. He scored wins over four certain Hall of Famers (Morales, Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Manuel Marquez, and Oscar De La Hoya), plus he kayoed Ricky Hatton and Miguel Cotto despite giving away size against both. He was named Fighter of the Year three times ('06, '08, and '09), and to name anybody else Fighter of the Decade would be unfathomable.

While Floyd Mayweather can boast an undefeated record, he comes up just short of what Pacquiao achieved in every other respect. His 18-0 mark included alphabet titles in five divisions and RING titles in two. He's ranked second at 130 pounds, first at 135, seventh at 140, and second at 147. And he defeated two sure-fire Hall of Famers (De La Hoya and Marquez) while also beating the likes of Diego Corrales, Jose Luis Castillo, and Ricky Hatton.

Depending on how you scored his fights, Bernard Hopkins has an argument to be higher than number three. All three of the losses on his 14-3 decade record were debatable decisions and he defeated such superstars as De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad, Winky Wright, Antonio Tarver, and Kelly Pavlik. "The Executioner" also set the middleweight defense record and held RING titles in two divisions. It all adds up to enough to rank him one spot ahead of the last guy to defeat him, Joe Calzaghe. The Welshman went 19-0 and also held RING titles in two divisions, but his best wins were the close call against Hopkins, a decision over a faded Roy Jones, and points wins over Mikkel Kessler and Jeff Lacy. Importantly, unlike the top three fighters on this list, Calzaghe was never rated pound-for-pound number one by THE RING.

Marquez went 20-3-1, won titles in three divisions (including one RING title), and gets credit for being Pacquiao's all-around toughest opponent. Winky Wright compiled a 12-2-1 record with one RING title, and it would have been two if he'd gotten the win instead of a draw against Jermain Taylor. Importantly, Wright's only two losses in the 2000s came way out of his weight class (against Hopkins) and after he'd grown old (against Paul Williams). One of the men Wright made his reputation against, Sugar Shane Mosley, ranks next with a record of 13-5 with 1 no-contest. Mosley held the RING title at junior middle and could have been RING champ at welter also if the current championship policy had existed when he beat De La Hoya in 2000.

Barrera went 16-5 with titles in three divisions, one RING belt, two wins over Morales, a career-defining defeat of Naseem Hamed, and the distinction of having all of his losses come against future Hall of Famers, with the too-soon-to-tell exception of Amir Khan. Rafael Marquez posted a 20-3 record in the 2000s with belts in two divisions and one RING title reign. Though he lost two of three classic wars against Israel Vazquez, the fact that Marquez' prime was really at bantamweight gives him the pound-for-pound edge over his rival. But Vazquez isn't far behind, edging out the likes of Ivan Calderon, Morales, Kostya Tszyu, and Miguel Cotto for the 10th spot. Vazquez went 22-2 with two RING title reigns in one division, and both of his losses—against Marquez and Oscar Larios—were avenged. ■



[Summary]

Heavyweights

Vitali Klitschko W 12 Kevin Johnson
(Retains WBC Title)
Alexander Povetkin KO 3 Leo Nolan
Chris Arreola KO 4 Brian Minto
Denis Bakhtov KO 1 Edgars Kalnars
Samuel Peter KO 4 Gabe Brown
Alexander Ustinov W 12 Monte Barrett
Albert Sosnowski W 12 Paolo Vidoz
Jean-Marc Mormeck W 8 Vinny Maddalone
Nagy Aguilera KO 1 Oleg Maskaev
George Arias KO 2 Ademar Correa
Johnathon Banks KO 1 Marcel Zeller
Tony Thompson KO 9 Chazz Witherspoon
Jarno Rosberg W 10 Juho Haapoja

Cruiserweights

Danny Green KO 1 Roy Jones
Marco Huck W 12 Ola Afolabi
Enzo Maccarinelli KO 1 Krisztian Jaksi
Troy Ross KO 1 Daniel Bispo
Salvatore Erittu W 12 Shawn Cox
Serdar Sahin W 10 Varol Vekiloglu
Tomasz Hutkowski W 10 Ismail Abdoul
Mateusz Masternak TKO 7 Jameson Bostic
Pawel Kolodziej KO 6 Rob Calloway

Light Heavyweights

Jean Pascal W 12 Adrian Diaconu
(Retains WBC Title)
Bernard Hopkins W 12 Enrique Ornelas
Juergen Braehmer W 12 Dmitry Sukhotsky

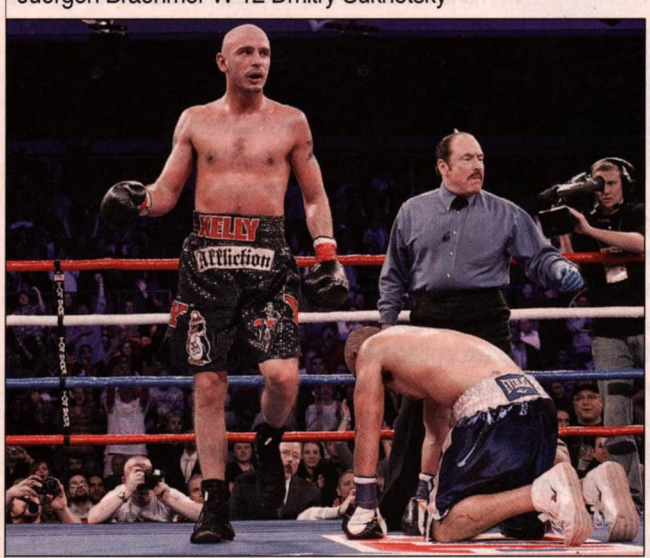


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pavlik stops Espino in five

Tamas Kovacs W 12 Samson Onyango
Eric Lucas KO 4 Ramon Pedro Moyano
Boniface Kabore W 12 Jevgenijs Andrejevs

Super Middleweights

Lucian Bute KO 4 Librado Andrade
(Retains IBF Title)
Eduard Gutknecht W 12 Karoly Balzsay
Fernando Guerrero KO 4 Jessie Nicklow
Matt Korobov KO 3 Ken Dunham

Middleweights

Kelly Pavlik KO 5 Miguel Angel Espino
(Retains World/WBC Titles)
Sebastian Zbik W 12 Emanuele Rosa
Paul Williams W 12 Sergio Martinez
Matthew Macklin W 10 Rafael Pintos
Oscar Veliz W 12 Fernando Pereyra
Lorenzo Cosseddu W 12 Israel Carrillo
Koji Sato W 12 Tetsuya Suzuki
Erislandy Lara W 10 Luciano Perez
Darren Barker KO 7 Danny Butler
Dominik Britsch KO 5 Cleber Alves
Carlos Baldomir KO 4 Jairo Siris
David Lemieux KO 2 Delray Raines
Craig McEwan W 8 James Parison

Junior Middleweights

Vanes Martirosyan KO 3 Willie Lee
Erislandy Lara W 10 Luciano Perez
Takayuki Hosokawa Tech. Win 6 Shinsuke Matsumoto
Ronald Hearns KO 6 Shadrack Kipruto
David Pulido KO 3 Christian Kamara
Joachim Alcine W 12 Christophe Canclaux
Carlos Quintana KO 3 Jesse Feliciano
Lenny Bottai W 12 Turgay Uzun
Zaurbek Baysangurov KO 5 Frank Shabani
Shawn Porter KO 4 Jamar Patterson
Dmitry Nikulin KO 3 Abdulaziz Matazimov
Carson Jones KO 3 Tyrone Brunson
Omar Henry KO 1 Jessie Davis

Welterweights

Jan Zaveck KO 3 Isaac Hlatshwayo
(Wins IBF Title)
Rafal Jackiewicz W 12 Delvin Rodriguez
Anthony Small W 12 Thomas McDonagh
Saul Alvarez W 12 Lanardo Tyner
Euri Gonzalez W 12 Cosme Rivera
Daisuke Nakagawa KO 10 Kazukaze Yamakawa

Luciano Cuello W 10 Carlos Velasquez
Giuseppe Langella W 10 Gianluca Frezza
Victor Ortiz KO 7 Antonio Diaz
Dan Nazareno KO 6 Jung-Hoon Yang
Zapir Rasulov KO 5 Charles Damas
Mike Anchondo W 8 Mauricio Herrera
Ed Paredes KO 4 Oscar Leon
Oyewale Omotoso KO 3 Hwan-Young Park
Lanard Lane KO 2 Said El Harrak

Junior Welterweights

Amir Khan KO 1 Dmitriy Salita
(Retains WBA Title)
Timothy Bradley W 12 Lamont Peterson
Paul Malignaggi W 12 Juan Diaz
Humberto Soto W 10 Jesus Chavez
Brunet Zamora W 12 Christophe De Busillet
Cesar Cuenca W 12 Nazareno Ruiz
Anthony Small W 12 Thomas McDonagh
Tim Coleman W 12 Mike Arnaoutis
Fariz Kazimov W 10 DeMarcus Corley
Juan Castaneda W 10 Alejandro Valladares
Jose Santa Cruz KO 3 Anthony Mora
Danny Garcia KO 2 Enrique Colin
Jose Cotto KO 6 Ilido Julio
Lee Purdy KO 4 Mark Douglas
Steven Wills KO 4 Chad Bennett
Ruslan Provodnikov KO 2 Victor Castro

Lightweights

Edwin Valero KO 7 Hector Velazquez
(Retains WBC Title)
Joan Guzman D 12 Ali Funeka
(For Vacant IBF Title)
Kevin Mitchell W 12 Breidis Prescott
Aldo Rios W 12 Claudio Olmedo
Rene Gonzalez W 12 Noe Bolanos
Martin Honorio W 10 John Molina
Guillaume SalingueW 10 Mihaita Mutu
Didier Basulto W 10 Miguel Galindo
Fernando Da Silva KO 8 Jorge Corimayo
Moises Solis KO 4 Santos Martinez
Edner Cherry KO 3 Jovann Jones
Benoit Gaudet KO 3 Jorge Banos

Junior Lightweights

Takahiro Aoh W 10 Feider Viloria
Pier Cote W 10 Jason Hayward
Ronald Pontillas D 10 Joan De Guia
Hero Bando D 8 Daiki Kaneko
Norihide Yoshino KO 6 Hiroshi Katayama

Featherweights

Cristobal Cruz Tech. Draw 3 Ricardo Castillo
(Retains IBF Title)
Carlos Yanez W 12 Cristian Arrazola
Miguel Beltran W 10 Miguel Roman
Leonardo Doronio KO 9 Rene Bucag
Mirzhan Zhaksylykov KO 7 Peesaddaeng Kiatsakthanee
John Simpson KO 7 Stevie Bell
Uriel Barrera KO 6 Camilo Marcial

Junior Featherweights

Cristian Mijares KO 6 B.J. Dolorosa
Ricardo Cordoba KO 4 Luis Murillo
Kenichi Yamaguchi W 12 Roberto Lerio
Jesus Galicia W 10 Arturo Reyes
Michael Franco KO 8 Kermin Guardia
Rafael Hernandez W 10 Ariel Vasquez
Guillermo Rigondeaux W 8 Lante Addy
Zsolt Bedak KO 7 Ramie Laput

Bantamweights

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 4 Alvaro Perez
(Retains WBC Title)
Anselmo Moreno KO 11 Frederic Patrac
(Retains WBA Title)
Nehomar Cermeno KO 11 Alejandro Valdez
Stephane Jamoye W 12 Mohamed Bouleghcha
Carlos Rodriguez W 10 Francisco Soto
Kennedy Kanyanta KO 6 Ramadhan Mkundi

Junior Bantamweights

Vic Darchinyan KO 2 Tomas Rojas
(Retains WBC Title)
Danilo Pena W 12 Marvin Tampus
Lee Haskins W 12 Don Broadhurst
Evert Briceno W 10 Juan Mercedes
Juan Montes W 10 Fernando Lumacad
Richard Olisa W 10 Jayson Siaton
Luis Valdez KO 7 Jorge Cardenas

Flyweights

Koki Kameda W 12 Daisuke Naito
(Wins WBC Title)
Luis Concepcion KO 4 Roberto Leyva
Shigetaka Ikehara KO 3 Shingo Yamaguchi
Karim Guerfi KO 2 Juma Fundi
Cesar Seda KO 1 Daniel Reyes

Junior Flyweights

Juan Carlos Reveco KO 3 Ronald Barrera
Johnriel Casimero KO 11 Cesar Canchila
Ramon Hirales W 12 Erik Ramirez
Gerardo Pinon KO 10 Jose Alfredo Zuniga
Bert Batawang KO 5 Jack Amisa

Strawweights

Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 12 Juan Palacios
(Retains WBC Title)
Luis Rios W 10 Carlos Melo
Momo Koseki W 10 Teeraporn Pannimit

Timothy Bradley W 12 Lamont Peterson

Rancho Mirage, California: As one might expect from a man who grew up under the difficult circumstances that Peterson did, hustling on the streets and sleeping outdoors, he put up a game effort against Bradley. Unfortunately for Peterson, he couldn't beat the speedy WBO titlist on courage alone. The fans at the Agua Caliente Casino enjoyed a competitive contest, though the verdict was never in doubt.

"I wanted him to fight me more," Peterson said. "But he did his job; he stayed on the outside and used the entire ring."

That's putting it mildly. Bradley put on a clinic from the opening bell, and except for a few moments during the middle rounds, had his way throughout. Scores of 118-110, 119-108 and 120-107 were turned in by judges Denny Nelson (USA), Jose Cobian (USA), and Fritz Werner (USA), respectively. The referee was Pat Russell (USA). The scorecards reflected Bradley's mastery, though they didn't reflect Peterson's gutsy performance.

"He was a beast," said Bradley, 25-0 (11). "He made me fight like nobody else in my career, ever. He put on a great show; he's a tough, tough fighter."

Bradley, 138, Palm Springs, California, owned the early rounds, landing whip-cracking rights at will, and knocking Peterson down in the third. Peterson, 139, Memphis, Tennessee, pounded his way back into the fight with thunderous blows to Bradley's body. As the torrid third round came to a close, it looked as if Peterson was going to make a fight of it. But just as Peterson was gaining momentum in rounds four and five, Bradley, under advisement from his corner, began boxing and moving.

The change in strategy worked, for Peterson couldn't get close enough to do any damage. Bradley showed great footwork, ring generalship, and hand speed, complementing his right leads with hard left hooks. Peterson, 27-1 (13), made a last-ditch effort in rounds 11 and 12, but it was too little, too late.

Bradley is rated by THE RING as number one in the 140-pound ratings, behind champion Manny Pacquiao. Until Pacquiao gives up his RING belt, Bradley will have to content himself by establishing dominance in a very deep junior welterweight division. Amir Khan has been mentioned as a possible opponent, while Paulie

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Bradley spears Peterson with a left

Malignaggi, Juan Manuel Marquez and Ricky Hatton would also be interesting matchups. When future opponents were mentioned after the bout, Bradley merely said, "Show me the money, baby. We'll be there."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
(12-12-09)

Vic Darchinyan KO 2 Tomas Rojas

Rancho Mirage, California: Reigning WBC junior bantamweight titlist Darchinyan promised to box more going into his bout with Rojas, but by the end of the first round he was winging his shots like the Darchinyan we all know so well. In round two, he landed a crushing left hook that put Rojas down for the count.

"I knew he was ducking my left," said Darchinyan, THE RING's top-rated junior bantam. Of course, with Darchinyan throwing his left like he was holding a brick in it, Rojas had no choice but to try to duck. But Darchinyan astutely changed the direction of one of his haymakers and threw it at chest level, clipping the Mexican journeyman on the jaw. Call him a caveman if you like, but Darchinyan has a modicum of smarts.

It's unfortunate for Darchinyan, 33-2-1 (27), that he occasionally falls short during fights. His knockout loss to Nonito Donaire two years ago and his recent decision loss to Joseph Agbeko are big blemishes on his record. Otherwise, he'd be the most colorful, fearsome fighter of the lighter-weight divisions. Promoter Gary Shaw mentioned that a rematch with Donaire is in the works. The consensus opinion is that Donaire is simply too slick for Darchinyan, but one can't discount Darchinyan too easily. Donaire has a love-hate relationship with the sport, and like Darchinyan, can run hot and cold. There's no telling how a rematch would turn out. At least the customers at the Agua Caliente Casino saw that Darchinyan can still punch.

Darchinyan, 114½, Sydney, Australia, started round one in a boxing mode. He wasn't flapping his arms about like a crazy crab; instead, he was jabbing, and appeared relatively calm. But as the final seconds were ticking away, he began throwing mean shots that rained down

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Andre Ward

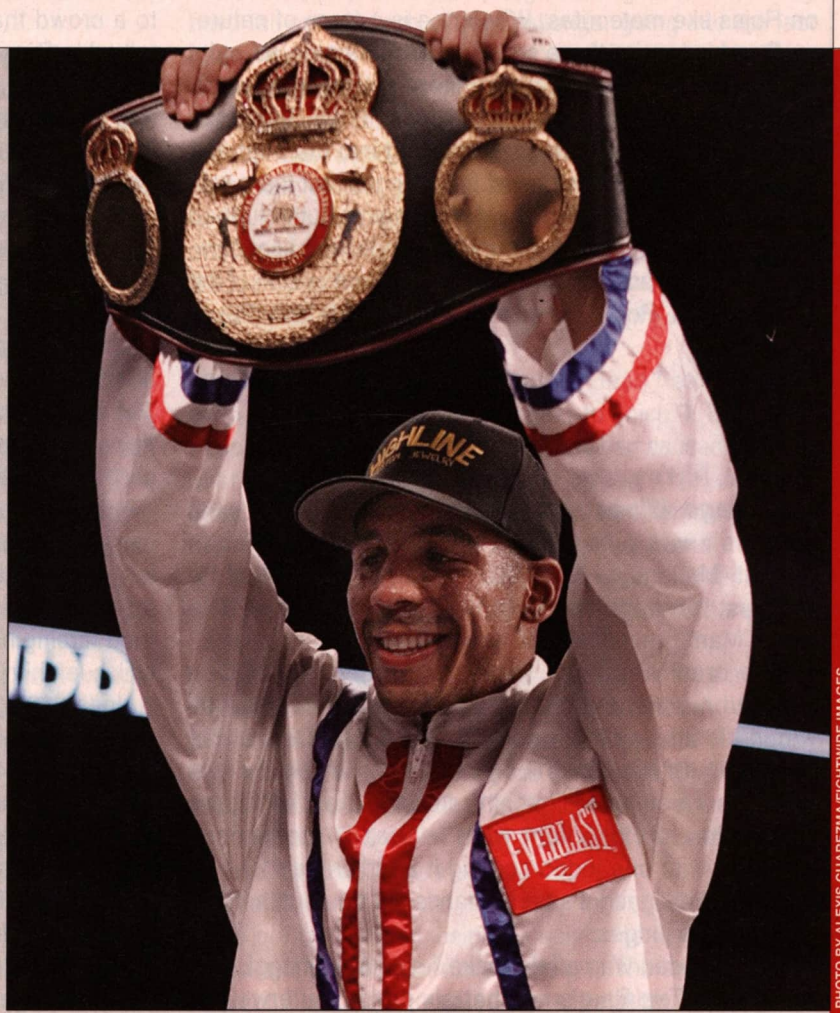


PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Leave it to Andre Ward to save face for his country. With his gold medal at the 2004 Athens Games, America's lone first-place finish since 1996, Ward prevented the U.S. boxing team from getting shut out in consecutive Olympics. As a pro five years later, Ward kept U.S. fighters from going 0-for-3 in the first round of the "Super Six World Boxing Classic."

The Oakland, California, native shook up the Super Six with his domination of Mikkel Kessler, the tournament co-favorite. Though the "Viking Warrior" represented a major step up in class, Ward made it look easy. He won eight of 10 rounds on two cards, and seven on the other. Ward seemed to be on the brink of scoring a knockout when the fight went to the cards in the 11th, the result of a Kessler cut caused by an accidental head butt.

The breakthrough win was five years in the making for Ward, who turned pro at age 20. Despite pressure to excel quickly, longtime trainer Virgil Hunter and promoter Dan Goossen opted for the slow-and-steady approach. It's proving to be the right move. Ward is maturing into the star many thought he could become after winning the gold, and the Super Six just might prove to be the vehicle that takes him the rest of the way.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Darchinyan wings a left at Rojas

on Rojas like meteorites. When one is a force of nature, as Darchinyan is, there's no fun in remaining as calm as a summer afternoon; it's far more satisfying to erupt. He erupted again in round two. Rojas, 113½, Veracruz, Mexico, had been in good spirits going into the bout and had managed to hold his own in exchanges, but there was just no stopping Darchinyan. "The Raging Bull" clubbed away with his dangerous left until he landed the final blow. Referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) stopped the bout at 2:54 of the second round. Rojas' record now stands at 32-12-1 (22).

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
(12-12-09)

Paulie Malignaggi W 12 Juan Diaz

Chicago, Illinois: After getting the short end of what many felt was a hometown decision against Diaz in August, Malignaggi told HBO's Max Kellerman that he was just "an opponent now." Four months later, "The Magic Man" proved himself wrong.

The brash Brooklyn, New York, native boxed and clowned his way to an impressive unanimous decision win in his junior welterweight rematch with Diaz at the University of Illinois-Chicago Pavilion. When the two contenders first met four months earlier in Diaz' hometown of Houston, a close fight went to Diaz by unanimous decision, with one judge scoring it a ludicrous 118-110. This time, Malignaggi's performance left no doubts in the minds of the judges.

"All I needed was a fair shake," said Malignaggi, who entered as THE RING's number-six junior welterweight, while Diaz was number five. "The difference in this fight was that I stayed consistent. I wanted to use foot movement and hand speed to keep Juan Diaz from coming at me with pressure."

From the onset, the 29-year-old Malignaggi, 138¾, looked too fast and slick for the 26-year-old Diaz, 138½. Establishing his range quickly, Malignaggi jabbed and countered at the forward-moving "Baby Bull," then used his footwork and solid defense to stay out of danger. Malignaggi clearly took the first two rounds, after which Diaz emerged with a minor cut under his left eye from a punch. Malignaggi, who had played to a crowd that booed him on his way to the ring, also talked to Diaz and stuck out his tongue frequently.

Diaz, 35-3 (17), picked up the aggression in the third and fourth, when he landed enough solid shots to make it close. Though he ventured in tight and traded more frequently in those rounds, Malignaggi still appeared to outbox Diaz enough to get the edge. The fifth clearly went to Diaz, however, as Malignaggi spent most of the round getting outslugged along the ropes.

Malignaggi, 27-3 (5), regained the momentum in the sixth, when he got back on his toes and relied more on his jab. He finished the round by nearly decking Diaz with an uppercut. The feather-fisted Malignaggi froze, as if unsure what to do when an opponent is hurt. He spent most of the final 25 seconds taunting Diaz instead of working to finish him.

His confidence growing as the rounds wore on, Malignaggi continued to deviate from the fight plan by exchanging with the stronger Diaz, who got the edge in a few of the later sessions. Diaz was active throughout, but usually tried forcing his way inside instead of jabbing his way in, which left him open to Malignaggi's jab.

In the 10th, Malignaggi was awarded a dubious knockdown when he landed a shot to the back of Diaz' head, causing Diaz to tumble forward awkwardly. Diaz' glove appeared to skim the ring apron, which prompted referee Genaro Rodriguez (Illinois) to issue a standing-eight count. Hopelessly behind entering the final round, Diaz went for the knockout. Rather than play it safe, Malignaggi stood his ground and slugged it out with Diaz in what was the best round of the fight, though neither fighter appeared to be in serious danger.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Malignaggi greets Diaz with an uppercut

Diaz got the edge in the 12th, but it wasn't enough as all three judges—Mauro DiFiore (Illinois), Tom Miller (Ohio), and Michael Pernick (Florida)—scored it 116-111 for Malignaggi. THE RING had it 115-112 for the Magic Man, who called out Juan Manuel Marquez and Ricky Hatton, who stopped Malignaggi in November 2008.

"I just want big fights," said Malignaggi, who fought for the third time under new trainer Sharif Younan. "I think I have two, three more good years left in me. I think I can still accomplish a lot."

Television: **HBO**

Promoters: **Golden Boy Promotions, DiBella Entertainment, 8 Count Productions**

(12-12-09)

Jean Pascal W 12 Adrian Diaconu

Montreal, Quebec: Pascal had to dig deep in a rematch that proved worthy of the original, as he had two major obstacles to surmount in this second battle between the Montreal transplants in a vintage intra-city rivalry. This time Diaconu, 174½, proved sharper and more active, keeping rounds close throughout the fight. But Pascal, 174, had even bigger worries when his right shoulder dislocated in the third and remained a problem for the remainder of the night.

Pascal, 27, had captured the WBC light heavyweight strap in their June shootout before 13,500 Quebecois fans in a thrilling scrap that garnered an early fight-of-the-year nomination for its intense ebb-and-flow. Perhaps anticipating an anti-climactic second act in which the previous victor, Pascal, was expected to dominate, only 8,900 spectators returned to the Bell Centre for the rematch, only to be treated to a fight that looked closer than the first despite the judges' scoring.

A sparkplug of a light heavyweight, the 5'9" Diaconu, Montreal via Ploesti-Prahova, Romania, started faster this time, scoring effectively with the jab and consistently honing in with right leads that kept the 5'11" Pascal, Laval, Quebec, via Port-au-Prince, Haiti, boxing respectfully from the periphery in the first two stanzas. The third saw the nimble-footed Pascal score late in the round with a left hook that left the challenger momentarily stunned, while Pascal mounted a blazing, if wild-swinging attack, with the intention of ending matters early. His back to the ropes, Diaconu survived the onslaught, when Pascal suddenly turned tail and retreated to his corner clearly in pain seconds before the round ended, his shoulder dislocated for the first of three times during the match.

Each time, Pascal's trainer, Marc Ramsay, would pop the shoulder back in, temporarily halting the excruciating pain and allowing Pascal to continue.

Surprisingly, Diaconu maintained a measured offense, sufficient enough to sweep the next three rounds, but not enough to exploit Pascal's handicap. The shoulder dislocated a second time in the seventh, but given Pascal's mental fortitude and Diaconu's unwillingness to punish his shoulder or push him into taxing exchanges, the fight may have fell out of reach of the challenger going into the last half of the fight.

Swift boxing along with some impressive combination work ensured that Pascal banked the eighth and ninth rounds. But round 10 saw Pascal rattle Diaconu, only to have his shoulder give out as he had his man vulnerable to the knockout. Again, a stunned Diaconu retreated on unsteady legs as Pascal unloaded a blistering salvo. Suddenly grimacing in pain, Pascal fell into full retreat once again at the round's end with his right arm dangling, virtually useless.

With the fight appearing to be a dead heat, Diaconu simply needed to find another gear to finish it. But it was Pascal, whose blistering combinations had caused swelling over Diaconu's right eye going into the 11th, who dug deep to finish the last two rounds in sensational fashion. Essentially one-armed, Pascal ripped home multiple left hooks against Diaconu in the 11th and defied pain to unleash a series of combinations that would seal the decision in the 12th.

Both men celebrated at the bell, but it was a brave Pascal who was correctly awarded the victory. Judges Julie Lederman (USA) and Claude Paquette (Canada) both tabulated 117-111, while the third judge, Dick Flaherty (USA), scored 118-110. THE RING saw it much closer, scoring 115-113 in favor of Pascal. The referee was Michael Griffin (Canada).

The career of Pascal, 25-1 (16), has crested since his gutsy performance in losing a decision to England's Carl Froch last year at super middleweight. The second outing against Diaconu cemented his reputation as a fighter

possessing intestinal fortitude along with plenty of flash. It was the second successful defense of the WBC trinket for Pascal, who moved up two spots to number five in THE RING light heavyweight rankings. The 31-year-old Diaconu, 26-2 (15), fell one slot to number nine.

Promoters: **GYM (Groupe Yvon Michel), Interbox**

(12-11-09)

Paul Williams W 12 Sergio Martinez

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Williams, 28, Augusta, Georgia, and Martinez, 34, Madrid, Spain, gave 2,927 fight fans an early Christmas present at Boardwalk Halls' Adrian Phillips Ballroom. Little did anyone suspect the taut middleweight clash between Williams, 157, and Martinez, 159, would turn out to be a Fight of The Year candidate.

After all, Martinez, 44-2-2 (24), was a substitute for middleweight world champion Kelly Pavlik, who pulled out of the original October 3 date with Williams, 38-1 (27), because of a staph infection in his left hand. The twist is that Pavlik was actually the box-office attraction. Still, what the crowd and an HBO TV audience saw was actually a treat from a pair of southpaws. They witnessed nonstop back-and-forth, give-and-take action and a pair of first-round knockdowns, which spawned a heavily disputed decision. It also proved in the end that Williams, "the most-avoided fighter in boxing," is very vulnerable.

The first round indicated that something good was about to happen. The 6'1" Williams played the role of stalker, popping out his jab and cornering Martinez in the first half of the round. The first knockdown came from a grazing right that caught Martinez off balance, glanced off his left shoulder, and landed on his head. In the last minute of the opening round, Martinez, certainly not considered the power puncher of the two, came back with a more emphatic knockdown. He blasted Williams with a left to the chin, hurting "The Punisher" and putting him into survival mode for the remaining 30 seconds of the round.

Martinez used a simple approach to fend off the constantly oncoming Williams, taking a step back and then countering with a right hook. It often left Williams lunging and missing horribly. It also left him terribly exposed to counters and served as a template to anyone who faces him in the future. Martinez masterfully used distance throughout the fight, counteracting Williams' pressure and reach advantage using the tactic. It led to effective rounds for Martinez in the second and third, as The Punisher proceeded to get punished with right hook after right hook, mixed in with an occasional left to the body.

Williams, who, according to CompuBox, connected on 300 of 979 total punches throughout the fight to Martinez' 254 of 638, suffered a nasty cut over his left eye in the fourth round.

Maybe it was the sight of his own blood that sparked Williams, but he went on the attack in the fifth, popping his jab with more consistency and finding his range. Despite throwing wide, amateurish punches, Williams still managed to corner Martinez and blast him with combinations.

On THE RING scorecard, Williams won the fifth, sixth, and seventh rounds, making it an even fight. But Martinez came charging back in the eighth, going back on the attack with right hooks that stung Williams in the face and had him reeling backward.

The final three rounds determined the fight, which THE RING awarded to Martinez for being more accurate and landing the harder punches. But somehow, one judge, Pierre Benoist (USA), didn't see it that way. In fact, it's hard to believe Benoist saw anything at all, after awarding Williams with an outlandish 119-110 decision—calling the first round even, giving Martinez the second, then scoring the next 10 rounds for Williams.

Judge Julie Lederman (USA) had it a 114-114 draw, while judge Lynn Carter (USA) had Williams winning, 115-113. THE RING had Martinez ahead, scoring it 116-113.

"I thought my guy won by a point," said Lou DiBella, Marti-

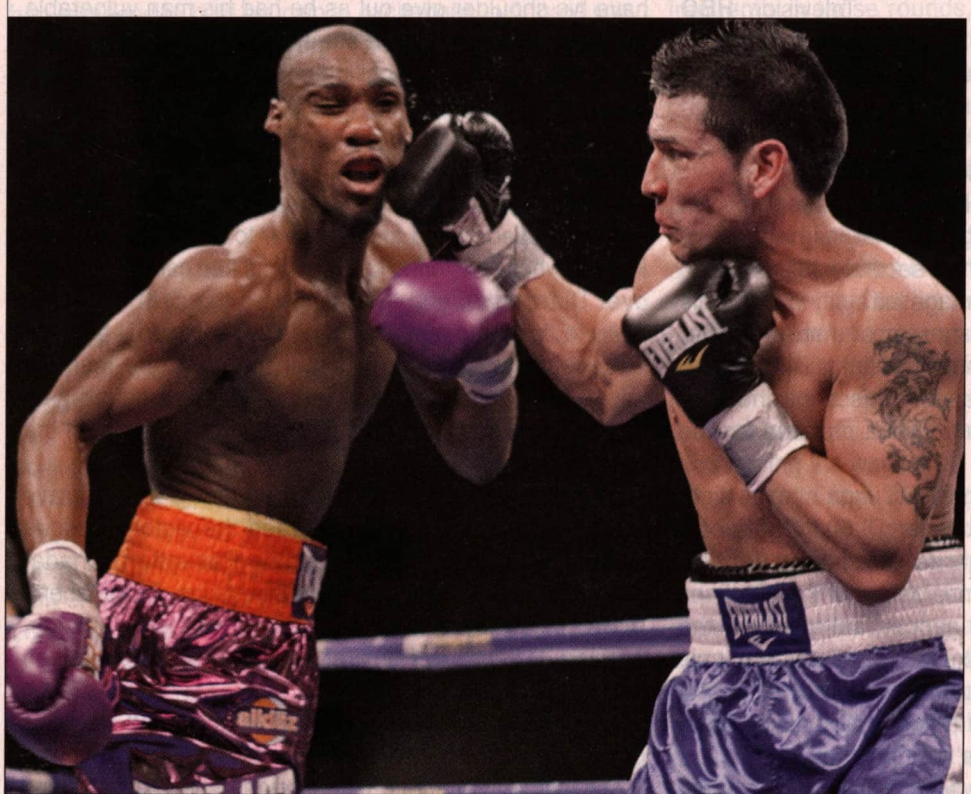


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Martinez nails Williams with a right

nez' promoter. "I can live with a close 115-113 loss, or a draw. But that one score, 119-110, I have no idea where that came from, or what fight that judge was watching. It's incompetence. He's someone who shouldn't be judging fights if he doesn't know what he's looking at—and that was a close fight."

Television: **HBO**

Promoter: **Goossen-Tudor Promotions**

(12-5-09)

Joseph Santoliquito

Chris Arreola KO 4 Brian Minto

Atlantic City, New Jersey: It was fun for the four rounds that it lasted. But then again, what fight isn't fun when you have two sluggers who can't get out of the way of a punch, such as Arreola, 263, Riverside, California, and Minto, 218, Butler, Pennsylvania, involved?

Fighting on the Williams-Martinez undercard, Arreola, 28-1 (25), was attempting to rebound from his lopsided loss to WBC heavyweight titlist Vitali Klitschko in September, while Minto, 34-3 (21), was looking to show what he can do when given a shot on HBO.

It's fair to say they both succeeded. Well, almost.

Though Arreola, 28, won the fight, his slovenly training habits continued to haunt him, as he came in five pounds heavier than his previous high. With each punch he threw, some part of Arreola's anatomy (the loose flesh hanging from an arm, his man boobs, or a stomach roll) would flap in the air of Boardwalk Halls' Adrian Phillips Ballroom.

Arreola didn't seem to learn much from the Klitschko loss either. The same porous defense that Klitschko pounded through three months earlier was on display again. This time, however, against the much smaller Minto, Arreola was able to get away with absorbing the punches.

Minto certainly provided some early fireworks in the first round, much to the chagrin of Arreola, with a crushing right to Arreola's face. But in the second, Arreola, after a few wild misses, began finding his range. A big right caused Minto's left eye to swell. In the fourth, Arreola strafed Minto with a left hook that sent him to the canvas.

Referee Eddie Cotton (USA) reached the count of eight when Minto got up on shaky legs. Arreola, sensing Minto was in real trouble, closed the deal with a pair of right-handed bombs, forcing Cotton to wave the fight over at the 2:40 mark of the fourth round.

"Brian was a real tough guy," said Arreola, before dropping what now seems to be the customary post-fight F-bomb. "He took some shots that I didn't think he'd be able to bounce back from."

Just as soon as Arreola wrapped up Minto, there was talk of a possible meeting with Tony Thompson, a ninth-round TKO winner over Chazz Witherspoon on the same undercard. It even stirred a few nasty words between the two, before they reconciled.

Television: **HBO**

Promoter: **Goossen-Tudor Promotions**

(12-5-09)

Joseph Santoliquito

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Minto takes a count from ref Eddie Cotton

Koki Kameda W 12 Daisuku Naito

Saitama, Japan: Unbeaten Japanese southpaw Kameda, 22-0 (14), 112, captured the WBC flyweight belt as he was awarded a unanimous decision over fellow Tokyo, Japan, resident and defending WBC beltholder Daisuke Naito, 35-3-3 (22), 112, at Super Arena.

Hubert Minn (USA) and Daniel Van de Wiele (Belgium) both scored it 117-111, and Max DeLuca (USA) had it 116-112, all in favor of Kameda, 12 years Naito's junior at 23. The referee was Hector Afu (Panama), who controlled the fast-moving pair very well.

In terms of action, the fight failed to live up to the lofty expectations that preceded it. Kameda, who

had boldly predicted a kayo victory within the first three rounds, retreated and circled through most of the fight to create negative but effective counterpunching, while Naito remained aggressive, stalking the elusive challenger.

Throughout the contest, Naito threw at least twice as many punches as Kameda, who refused to mix it up toe-to-toe and kept averting the defending titlist's assault with his peek-a-boo guard and backpedaling footwork. Kameda was never the tiger he tends to be in most bouts. Instead, he played the role of a fox, pretending to be on the defensive. Kameda scored with a handful of counters, which proved more effective than Naito's abundant punches that missed the mark.

Despite the wide margin on the official cards, many spectators, including former titleholder Hideyuki Ohashi, felt Naito deserved the decision. Naito remained the aggressor throughout, but he looked more loser than winner in the end, regardless of his greater energy shown in attacking the running challenger. The loser's face was grotesquely swollen, with a nose that was likely fractured. In retrospect, the tide might have turned in the second, when Kameda scored with a light but well-timed southpaw jab that bloodied Naito's nose. The nose continued to stream blood throughout.

The first surprise was the scores announced after the first four rounds based on the WBC's open scoring system. Though Naito seemingly dominated three sessions, the tallies read: 38-38 (twice) and 39-37 for Kameda.

The second surprise happened after the eighth, when the scores were announced 77-75 (twice) and 78-74, all for Kameda, though it looked virtually even at that time. The judges apparently favored Kameda's technical savvy over Naito's fighting spirit.

Naito gave it his best shot as he kept going forward to attack the retreating challenger, though he missed plenty of his punches. Kameda put on an economic performance, doing his best work with counters when Naito left himself wide open after missing with roundhouse combinations and losing his balance.

Aware of being behind on points after the eighth, the champ desperately became more aggressive, stalking the counterpuncher from pillar to post. But he failed to catch him, and the 10th saw Naito sustain another cut. Kameda was in command in rounds nine, 10, and 11, but it was Naito who clearly won the final three minutes.

It might have been the final round of Naito's career. It was rumored that the 35-year-old would hang up the gloves for good should he lose his belt to Kameda. He made five successful defenses of the WBC strap, which he won in a July 2007 rematch against Pongsaklek Wonjongkam.

Promoter: **Miyata Promotions**

(11-29-09)

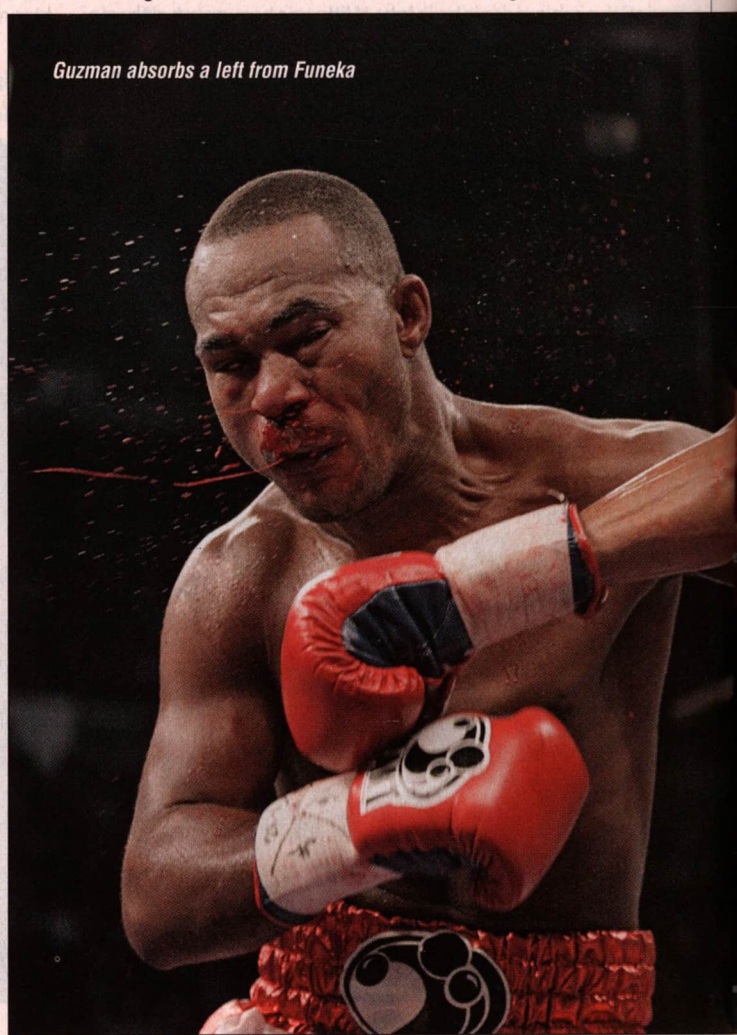
Joe Koizumi

Ali Funeka D 12 Joan Guzman

Quebec City, Quebec: Former heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, doing ringside commentary for HBO, must have had Evander Holyfield flashbacks when he heard the scoring, as Guzman-Funeka ended with one of the worst decisions in years.

Before a packed house of more than 16,000 at Quebec City's Pepsi Coliseum, the chief supporting bout to the Lucian Bute-Librado Andrade rematch was a Funeka clinic in consistency and effective punching that went for naught, due to inexplicable tallies rendered by two of the three judges. As the majority draw kept the IBF lightweight belt vacant, Funeka, who lost a controversial decision to Nate Campbell on Valentine's Day, must be wondering whom he ticked off to deserve such a fate.

The unsinkable Guzman, 134½, Brooklyn, New York, started strong against lanky Funeka, 133¾, East London, South Africa, as he managed to get inside of his opponent's much longer reach. But Funeka, 31, began connecting with the jab with more frequency starting in round three, when he bloodied the native Dominican's nose. The next two rounds saw more of the same, as the South African walked down Guzman, 33, landing double and triple jabs and turning Guzman's head around with a right in the fifth.



Guzman absorbs a left from Funeka

Guzman, 29-0-1 (17), picked up the pace in the sixth, when he scored with power shots, but after a clash of heads cut Guzman's right eye in the seventh, the oozing blood seemed to sap him of his confidence. Appearing discouraged and frustrated, Guzman was looking for a desperation punch as Funeka jabbed him silly.

Funeka, 30-2-3 (25), stepped it up in the eighth, hurting Guzman badly with a short right, then following with a flurry of punches that had the 33-year-old Guzman reeling around the ring, ducking and holding on for dear life. Somehow, he survived the round.

Funeka controlled the ninth, 10th, and 11th with jabs and one-twos that sapped the will out of Guzman, who was by then in survival mode, throwing lunging punches just often enough to keep referee Jean-Guy Brousseau (Canada) from stopping the bout. The courageous New Yorker mounted a last-ditch rally in the 12th, but Funeka closed by winning most of the exchanges with his superior power.

Judge Joe Pasquale (USA) correctly scored it a reasonable 116-112 for Funeka, but was overruled by the outrageous 114-114 scores of both Benoit Roussel (Canada) and Alan Davis (Canada). THE RING scored it 116-112 for Funeka.

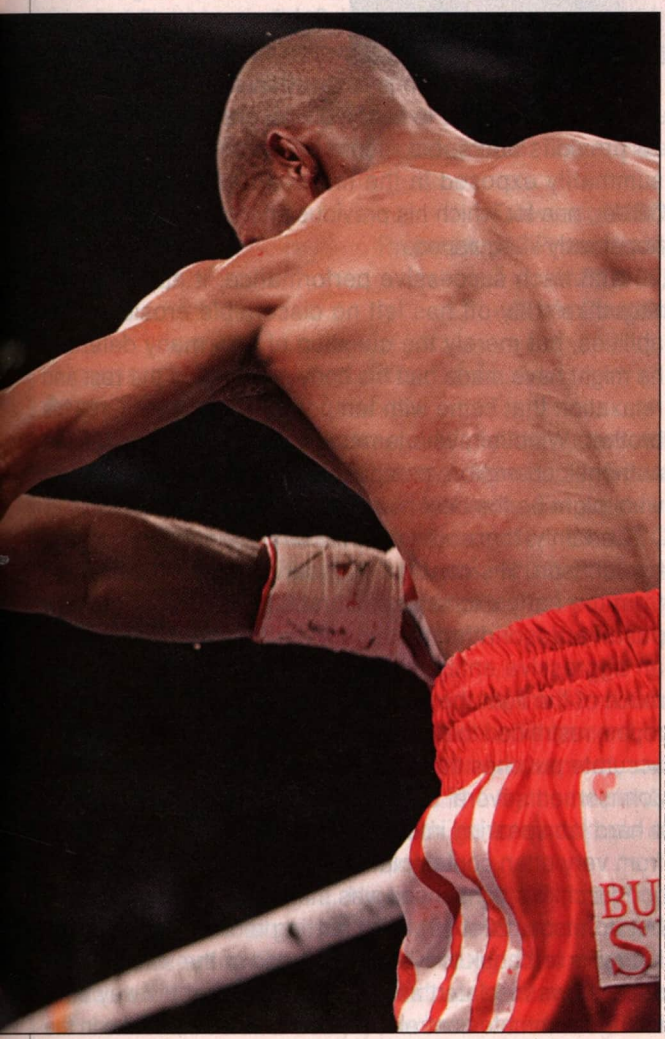


PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The crowd booed vociferously, Funeka looked stunned, and Guzman appeared relieved, knowing he had dodged a bullet. Funeka promoter Gary Shaw was livid, eventually hinting at asking for an investigation. "I respect Joan Guzman," Shaw said. "We're friends. But Joan, you know you didn't win that fight." Said Funeka: "I don't know what to say; I can't even talk about it."

Promoters: **Interbox, Golden Boy Productions**
Television: **HBO**
(11-28-09)
Mike Greenhill

Martin Honorio W 10 John Molina Jr.

Temecula, California: For lightweight prospect Molina, his first mistake might have been signing to face veteran Honorio in November.

The month has been a whirlwind in the career of Honorio, starting in 2000, when his father suffered a fatal heart attack while watching Martin win a tough decision in his native Mexico City. Since then, Honorio has posted some of his best wins in November, including a knockout of Frankie Archuleta ('08), and decisions against Rogers Mtgawa ('06) and Steven Luevano ('05).

Add Molina to the list.

The 26-year-old Covina, California, slugger proved too green for the 29-year-old Mexican when the two met at the Pechanga Resort & Casino. Molina, 134, was taller and held a four-inch reach advantage over Honorio, 133, who moved up two weight classes. But Molina had never been past six rounds and had just 22 amateur bouts, while Honorio had gone past eight rounds 13 times and had wins against current featherweight beltholders Luevano (W 12) and Cristobal Cruz (KO 1).

Leaning forward to throw his punches, Honorio, 27-4-1 (14), established a stiff jab and left hook as well as a consistent body attack in the opening round. Molina, 18-1 (14), seemed to be waiting for a chance to land a big bomb. The two traded in a thrilling exchange at the bell.

Darting in and out, Honorio used savvy footwork to thoroughly outbox Molina in the second. Molina moved forward constantly, but didn't seem to know how to cut off the ring or counterpunch. Honorio continued to confound him in the third, when he began mixing in a stinging right hand.

Honorio got brave after outboxing Molina for the first two minutes of the fourth. Molina took advantage with a pair of sharp counter right hooks. Honorio came back with a hard right to the face, but Molina finished the round with a sweeping right hook that Honorio absorbed well. After the round, trainer Joe Goossen told Molina that he was going to score a knockout.

It didn't happen. Honorio got back on his toes and resumed his boxing lesson in a fifth round, which he dominated, save for a wide Molina right hand that wobbled Honorio in the final 10 seconds. A headbutt early in the sixth opened up a cut on the side of Honorio's head, but it didn't slow down the Mexican. The two again traded at the

PHOTO BY RENAY JOHNSON/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Honorio hands Molina his first pro defeat

end of the round, with Honorio punctuating another strong three minutes with a hard right hand.

Honorio's speed and work rate continued to baffle Molina down the stretch, when Honorio landed more power shots, frequently drove Molina backward, and resisted the urge to trade. Honorio went for the knockout in the 10th, however, and wound up looking spent in the final two minutes. Despite the constant bodywork of Honorio, Molina's shots still had some zip on them, and he shook Honorio with a right uppercut and a left hook midway through the round. But he couldn't find the needed knockout shot to stay undefeated.

Marty Denkin (USA) saw it 99-91, while Ray Corona (USA) and Pat Russell (USA) scored it 98-92, all for Honorio. THE RING agreed with the tally of Corona and Russell. Molina blamed his performance on the flu and said he wanted a rematch.

"I couldn't pull the trigger," Molina said. "I couldn't do what I wanted tonight. Martin Honorio is a great fighter and he did well tonight. Am I satisfied? Absolutely not. Do I want a rematch? Yes."

Honorio was open to the idea of a rematch, but said it would have to be at 130 pounds. "I fought this one on his terms (at 135 pounds)," said Honorio, who is rated number seven at featherweight by THE RING.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**
(11-28-09)

Vitali Klitschko W12 Kevin Johnson

Bern, Switzerland: Having retired in 2005 because of persistent injuries to his back and knees, Klitschko, 247, Kiev, Ukraine, won his fourth-successive bout since returning to the ring in October 2008 in a characteristically commanding manner at the PostFinance Arena.

Johnson, 242½, Atlanta, Georgia, via Asbury Park, New Jersey, predicted that he would become the first person to knock out the 38-year-old former world heavyweight champion, but once the opening bell rang, he became compliant.

Confronted by Klitschko's formidable strengths—unyielding nature, impassive persona, unorthodox skills, brutish armory—Johnson disintegrated. Unbeaten in 23 previous bouts, his record and prefight boasts were summarily exposed in the first real test of his six-year career, one for which his previous encounters had left him hopelessly ill-equipped.

With each successive performance, it appears as if Klitschko's lay-off has left no discernible erosion of his abilities, but merely the question of how many defenses he might have made had his body not needed the rest and relaxation that came with temporary retirement. Only his brother, Wladimir, who is recognized by THE RING as the authentic champion, can pose a genuine argument as to who might be the best heavyweight in the world today.

Certainly, there was no worthwhile argument put forth by Johnson. His concern was survival, which was clear from the early exchanges. Durability was about the only positive description of Johnson's display because, as an aggressive entity, his impact was negligible. For too much of the fight the challenger was cooped up along the ropes, restrained there by a steady output of damaging and accurate punches thrown by Klitschko. His right hand hurt Johnson on several occasions and the constant threat of a hard jab spearing into his face prevented the challenger from very often contemplating retaliatory action.

Klitschko's right cheek was marked in the fourth round, but Johnson, 22-1 (9), was hurting more. The American landed a left hook to Klitschko's head in the sixth, but his success was isolated as Klitschko pounded his way back into consummate control. Johnson taunted Klitschko in the

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Johnson fields a right from Klitschko

11th round, but this only provoked the WBC beltholder into landing another barrage of blows.

Johnson was content to last the distance, but his total of five power punches landed of 54 thrown was the worst in the 25-year history of CompuBox and reflected Klitschko's virtual stranglehold from first bell to last. Fabian Guggenheim (Switzerland) and Omar Mintun (Mexico) both scored 120-108 for Klitschko, 39-2 (37), while Guido Cavalleri (Italy) made it 119-109. THE RING also scored 120-108 for Klitschko, who reiterated his desire to face Britain's WBA beltholder David Haye at some point in 2010.

It was Klitschko's third defense of the WBC belt that he regained from Samuel Peter in October 2008. The referee was Kenny Bayless (USA).

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: ***K2 Promotions***
(12-12-09)
Brian Doogan

Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 12 Juan Palacios

Rangsit, Thailand: Sithsamerchai's fourth successful defense of the strawweight belt he took from Eagle Kyowa in November 2007 was a unification of sorts. For no clear reason, other than to extort a sanctioning fee, the WBC created an "interim" title at 105 pounds, which Palacios won in November 2008 and defended twice before finally coming to Thailand to meet Sithsamerchai at the Future Park Plaza.

The shorter Palacios, 105, spent most of the 12 rounds persistently coming forward at the southpaw Sithsamerchai, 105, who used a long jab, effective lateral movement, and slick counterpunching to win rounds. The fight saw plenty of dirty tactics by both fighters, which led to a multitude of warnings but only one point deduction.

Palacios, 29, Managua, Nicaragua, got off to a good start in the first, when he threw nice compact shots that the retreating Sithsamerchai struggled to counter. Palacios landed a solid right hand upstairs early in the second and continued to enjoy the better of it through the first half of the round. Midway through, Sithsamerchai, 24, Bangkok, Thailand, suddenly became more fluid and began using his hand speed and slickness to beat Palacios to the punch, then slip out of danger.

Having found a comfortable range, Sithsamerchai continued catching Palacios flatfooted with counters in the third, when Palacios, 26-3 (21), was also docked a point due to an intentional head butt. Sithsamerchai, 33-0 (12), continued outboxing Palacios from a distance throughout the middle rounds. When the two got close, as was often the case in the entertaining fifth and sixth rounds, Sithsamerchai actually got the better of the exchanges.

Due to the WBC's gratuitous open scoring system, Sithsamerchai knew he was leading 40-36 (twice) and 39-36 on the cards through four rounds, and 79-74, 78-74 and 77-75 through eight. That likely led Sithsamerchai to play it safer in the final three sessions, when he slowed his pace and clinched more frequently. Palacios appeared to take those final three rounds on aggression and work rate. He landed a few clean shots in the 12th, including a left hook upstairs in the waning seconds, but never came close to the knockdown he would have needed to overcome his deficit on the cards.

Jae-Bong Kim (South Korea) scored it 116-114 and Franz Marti (Switzerland) had it 115-114 for Sithsamerchai, while Benjamin Rendon (Mexico) had it even at 114-114. THE RING saw it 115-112 for Sithsamerchai, who moved up from number three to number two in THE RING strawweight ratings. Palacios remained at number eight.

Promoter: **Petchyindee Boxing**
(11-27-09)

Zsolt Erdei W 12 Giacobbe Fragomeni

Kiel, Germany: The more refined skill and superior hand and foot speed of Erdei, 178¾, Hamburg, Germany, via Budapest, Hungary, was enough for the long-time light heavyweight titleholder to wrest the WBC cruiserweight belt from Fragomeni, 195¾, Milan, Italy, via majority decision at the Sparkassen-Arena. It was Fragomeni's second defense of the belt he won in a vacant title bout against Rudolf Kraj in October 2008.

An Olympic bronze medal winner at middleweight, Erdei has never been the most physically impressive specimen of a light heavyweight, so his decision to challenge Fragomeni, 26-2-1 (10), at the higher weight was greeted with much skepticism. What the strong and sturdy Fragomeni lacks in finesse, he has compensated for more than adequately with fierce determination and pressure. Erdei was languishing in anonymity at light heavyweight, however, despite having made 11 defenses (all in Germany or Hungary) since 2004, so he elected to take on the challenge. His daring paid off.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Erdei (right) steps up to cruiserweight against Fragomeni

The 35-year-old Hungarian utilized angles and the confines of the ring to stay out of harm's way and rattle off fast combinations from the opening bell. Fragomeni, 40, was passive in contrast, and his inability to pin Erdei down became a progressive source of frustration. By the third round, the flesh around the Italian's left eye was starting to swell from Erdei's persistent peppering and he was compelled to be more aggressive, forcing Erdei to fight inside and to withstand some heavy punching for the first time. But Erdei took his punishment and kept up his sharp hitting, so much so that Fragomeni had sustained heavy swelling around both eyes by the seventh round.

It became more fretful for Erdei, 31-0 (17), in the latter stages as the sheer physical exertion took its inevitable toll. The distance between the pair became smaller, and Erdei had to call on all of his experience and guile to compete with Fragomeni at close quarters. Incredibly, he was able to trade with the Italian when he needed to toward the end, and at the bell the faces on the Italian's cornermen betrayed their concern, which proved well founded. Esa Lehtosaari (Finland) scored 114-114, but Roger Tilleman (Belgium) and Robin Dolpierre (France) both scored 115-113 for Erdei, as did THE RING. The referee was Vic Drakulich (USA).

Promoter: **Universum Box-Promotion**

(11-21-09)

Brian Doogan

Rodel Mayol KO 2 Edgar Sosa

Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico: Given his recent run of skull-first fighting, they might want to force Mayol to wear a glove on his head from now on. The Filipino junior flyweight contender had two shots at division champ Ivan Calderon in 2009 that ended early due to headbutt-induced cuts. In his fifth try at a belt, Mayol again used his head, this time successfully as he stunned long-reigning WBC beltholder Sosa at the outdoor Palenque de la Feria.

Sosa, 108, had made 10 successful defenses after upsetting Brian Viloria in April 2007. He opened the first round of his 11th defense feeling out Mayol, 108. There were some good exchanges in the latter half of the round, however, as both landed clean left hooks to the jaw, and Mayol also mixed in a flush right hand that turned the head of Sosa, 30, Mexico City.

Seconds into round two, Mayol, 28, Mandaue City, Philippines, came forward with his head. His skull crashed hard into the cheek of Sosa, who went down as a result. He got up with a mouse under his left eye and a groggy look on his face. Referee Roberto Ramirez Jr. (Puerto Rico) ruled Mayol's head butt unintentional, though that was debatable, judging by the replays. Ramirez deducted a point from Mayol, and the ringside doctor declared Sosa fit to continue, though Sosa still appeared woozy as the fight resumed.

The two clashed heads again at the midway point of the round. Ten seconds later, Mayol unleashed a five-punch

combination, finished by a right hook and a left uppercut to the jaw that sent Sosa, 37-6 (21), tumbling backwards onto his seat with 1:20 to go in the round. He got up immediately and took a standing eight count, but Mayol, 26-4-1 (20), didn't give him a chance to clear his head. "Kid Rapido" quickly caught Sosa along the ropes, where he flurried with at least 20 shots, none of which Sosa answered. With several of those punches landing flush, Ramirez jumped in 68 seconds before the bell.

A few days after the fight, Sosa had a three-hour surgery to fix a triple fracture to the cheekbone that affected the orbit of his eye. Claiming Mayol's headbutt was intentional and left his fighter out on his feet, Sosa's promoter, Fausto Daniel Garcia, filed a protest with the WBC.

WBC president Jose Sulaiman quickly ruled in favor of Mayol. The organization handed Sosa the tag of "champion emeritus," which apparently gives him first crack at Mayol or WBC flyweight champ Koki Kameda. According to published reports, Sosa, who fell from number two to number four in THE RING 108-pound ratings, was planning to move up to flyweight after recovering from his injuries.

Mayol, who jumped from number eight to number three in THE RING ratings, is reportedly interested in facing Kameda as well. If it happens, Kameda might want to wear a helmet.

Promoter: **Boxeo de Gala**
(11-21-09)

Amir Khan KO 1 Dmitriy Salita

Newcastle, England: Much of the prefight hype revolved around the fact that a prominent, young British Muslim, Khan, 139½, Bolton, England, would be making his first defense of the WBA junior welterweight belt against an orthodox Jew in Salita, 140, Brooklyn, New York, via Odessa, Ukraine. But Khan swept all other angles to the side with a centralized assault from the opening bell in a fight that lasted just 76 seconds at the Metro Radio Arena.

From sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, Salita observed the strict laws of his religion—no training, driving, cooking, or even operating a light switch or the electronic room key in his hotel. He found himself blown away, however, by Khan's redeveloped confidence and ruthlessness in a one-round whirlwind that could have been a force of nature.

Khan, 22-1 (16), lay on the precipice of an unfulfilled career only 15 months previously when he was dismantled inside a single round himself by the powerful punching of Colombian Breidis Prescott (a points loser against another British prospect, Kevin Mitchell, on the Khan-Salita undercard). But his immediate decision to solicit the expertise of renowned trainer Freddie Roach and to relocate his training camp to Hollywood, California, has rehabilitated him on the world stage. This overwhelming performance served notice of his intent to take America by storm next year.

Khan connected with a swift left-right combination after just 11 seconds, his right glove connecting solidly with Salita's jaw and knocking him to the canvas. From that point, it was obvious there was only going to be one outcome. Salita, 30-1-1 (16), struggled to make the 140-pound limit, and Khan noted at the weigh-in that his challenger looked "tight at the weight." Once acquainted with Khan's strength and speed, Salita looked like a rabbit caught in headlights.

Khan swarmed all over Salita to floor him for a second time with a vicious variety of hooks and crosses. Salita attempted to get on his bike and ride out the storm, but a mountain stage in the Tour de France would have been no easier for him at this point. Khan kept up his attack and landed a crushing left hook to the jaw that knocked Salita down again before Puerto Rican referee Luis Pabon, mercifully, waved it over.

"I have sent a message out and most fighters will think twice about fighting me," Khan declared jubilantly. "But I'm not going to jump on the bandwagon and say I want to fight Floyd Mayweather or Manny Pacquiao, because I am not ready for that."

He is not, of course, but if he maintains his present rate of progress under Roach's attentive eye, he could realize his star potential before long. For Salita, who had never been in a ring with someone of Khan's prodigious ability, it will be difficult to raise himself back into title contention.

Promoter: **Frank Warren**
(12-05-09)
Brian Doogan ■

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Khan was all over Salita for a first-round knockout

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New Faces

(Continued from Page 24)

Korobov was enrolled at a sports academy, where he received a solid education, but where studying boxing was just as important as studying Pushkin. His coach, Nagim Khusnutdinov, built him into a sturdy amateur contender, and Korobov thrived under the military-style discipline. His day was simple: He trained. He went to school. He trained some more. He ate. He slept. To this day, the order persists. Korobov goes to bed at the same time every night. He gets up at the same time. He eats at the same time. "His whole life is about structure," Dunkin said.

Khusnutdinov knew his business. Korobov became one of the best amateurs in the world, winning world titles in 2005 (in Mianyang, China) and 2007 (in Chicago). Although Korobov was considered a favorite to win gold in Beijing in 2008, he lost a second-round bout. Few knew it at the time, but that was his final amateur appearance. He made the decision to turn pro soon after returning home and concluded that portion of his career with a remarkable 300-12 record. While in Chicago, he had an emotional reunion with his parents, but it was a bittersweet time for him.

"He knew he was going to go back to Russia," Dunkin said.

It was around that time that Dunkin began connecting with Korobov's family and "romanced them," as he puts it. Korobov was being contacted by other managers as well, although he was being careful to refrain from speaking with them, the better to preserve his amateur status. Plus, since he was interested in coming to America to be with his family, Korobov didn't want to get entangled in anything that might complicate his departure. That was going to be hard enough, since Khusnutdinov, at age 75, wasn't interested in

leaving the motherland. He wanted to keep training Korobov and have the fighter compete in Germany. After the Olympics, Korobov made the move.

"I didn't want to stay an amateur and wait four years until the next Olympics," he said. "I wanted to turn pro."

He came to Florida to rejoin his family and begin training, first with Dan Birmingham and then with Adams, with whom he hooked up this past fall. Although Birmingham has a sterling reputation, Dunkin paired Korobov with Adams in order to help the fighter handle himself better inside and deal more with rivals who "shake and bake," as Adams puts it.

"Adams is like a Russian trainer," Korobov said. "Every day is different with him. I never get tired of working with Kenny."

That's good, since Korobov has good quickness, powerful hands, and solid knowledge of the game, but he hasn't had the opportunity to face too many flashy fighters. Adams wants to make sure he isn't susceptible to their styles.

"We want to teach him to make adjustments against guys who have moves and twists and come out with certain types of punches he hasn't seen yet," Adams said. "We want to make sure he can block, parry, and catch. It's one step at a time, so that we can move to the next level."

Korobov has had some trouble so far with his stamina and dealing with fighters who come at him, bobbing and moving in unpredictable ways. His stamina is growing thanks to increased sparring, and he should be working up to eight-round bouts in the coming months. Once he's comfortable at that distance, it's time to make a jump—when the time is right.

"I'll go step by step," Korobov said. "I need some fights that go six, eight, 10 rounds, because championship fights are not three or four rounds. I'll keep working."

He'll also keep smiling. He's not only reunited with his family, but also with his wife, Anna. A Ukrainian, Anna had trouble getting out of Russia to join her husband.

"[Korobov] was scared," Dunkin said. "They held up her paperwork. There are some scary people over there." Now surrounded by those who mean the most to him, Korobov can enjoy the warm Florida weather—he laughed during a December conversation while revealing that it was probably "minus 20 or minus 30" in Moscow at the time—swimming outdoors and growing as a professional. His acclimation to American culture has been quick. He speaks English very well for someone who has been over here fewer than 18 months, and since Anna taught English in Ukraine, he'll keep improving. He reads Dan Brown, not Fyodor Dostoyevsky. And while he misses Russia at times, he is content to move forward in the U.S.

"I feel comfortable with this life," Korobov said. "I have no problems."

For a change. ■

Korobov slams a right into Loren Myers, who proved to be one of two so far that have gone the distance through Korobov's first nine fights. For now, the Russian middleweight is taking the slow and steady climb to contender status.

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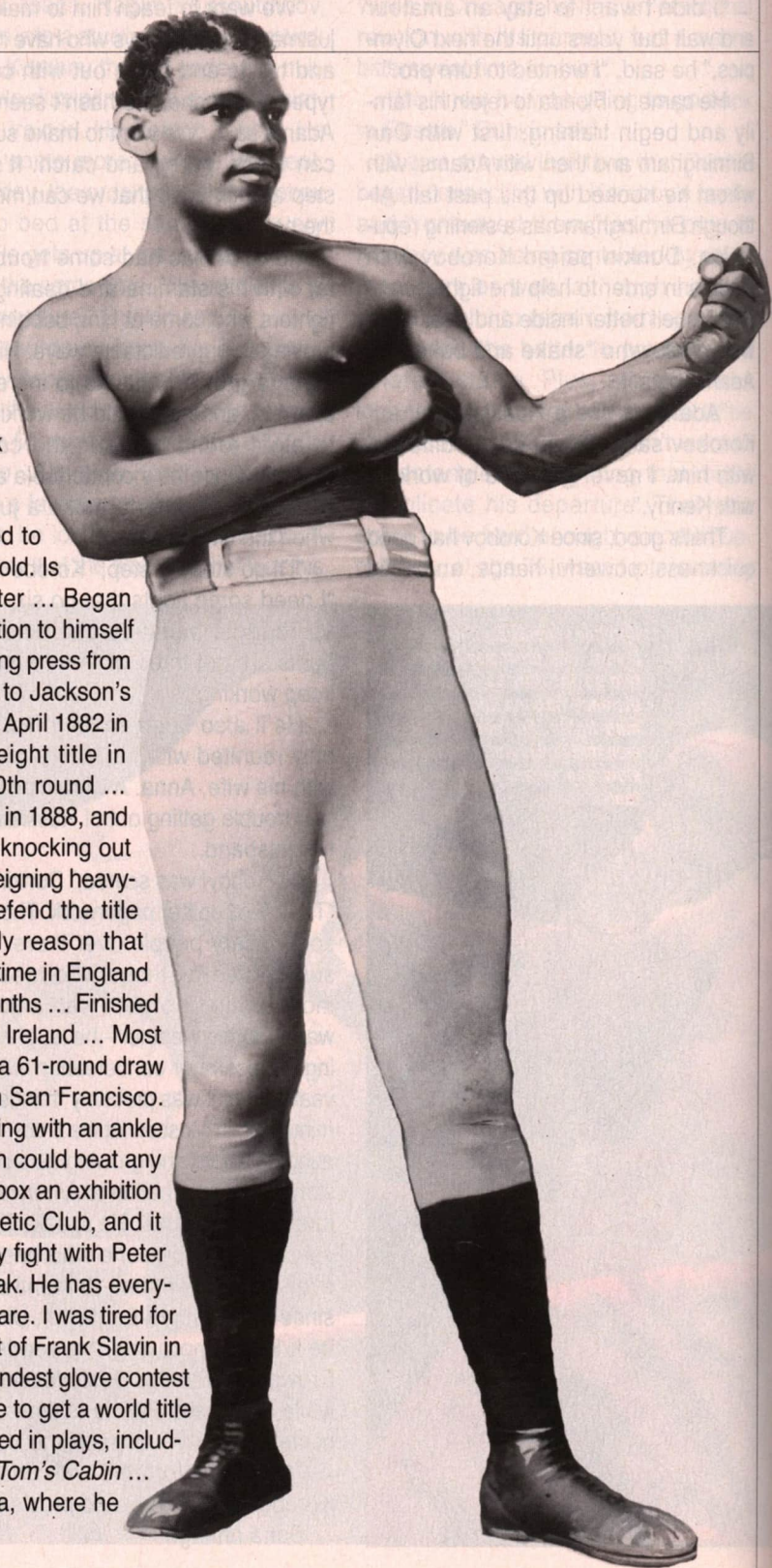
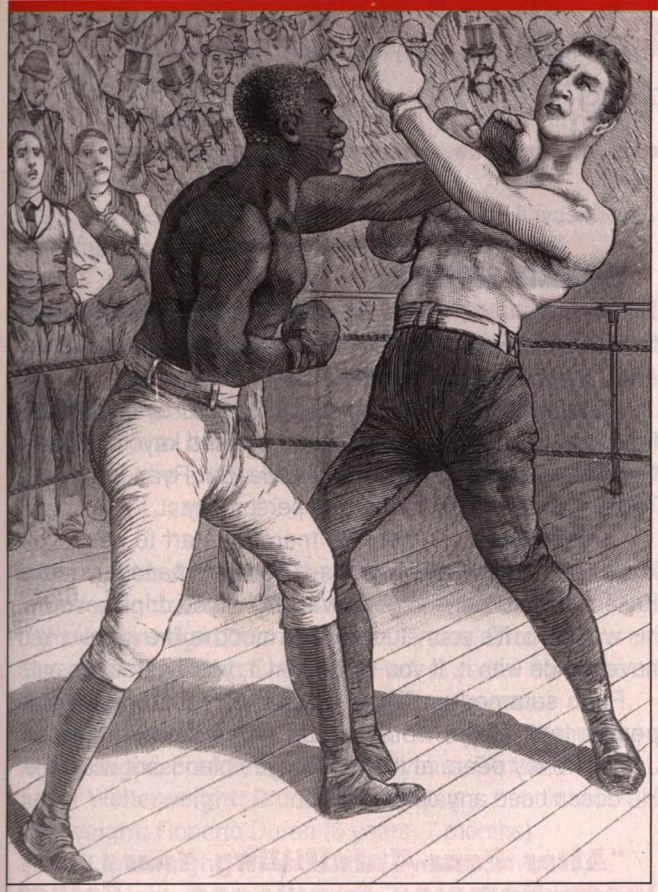
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

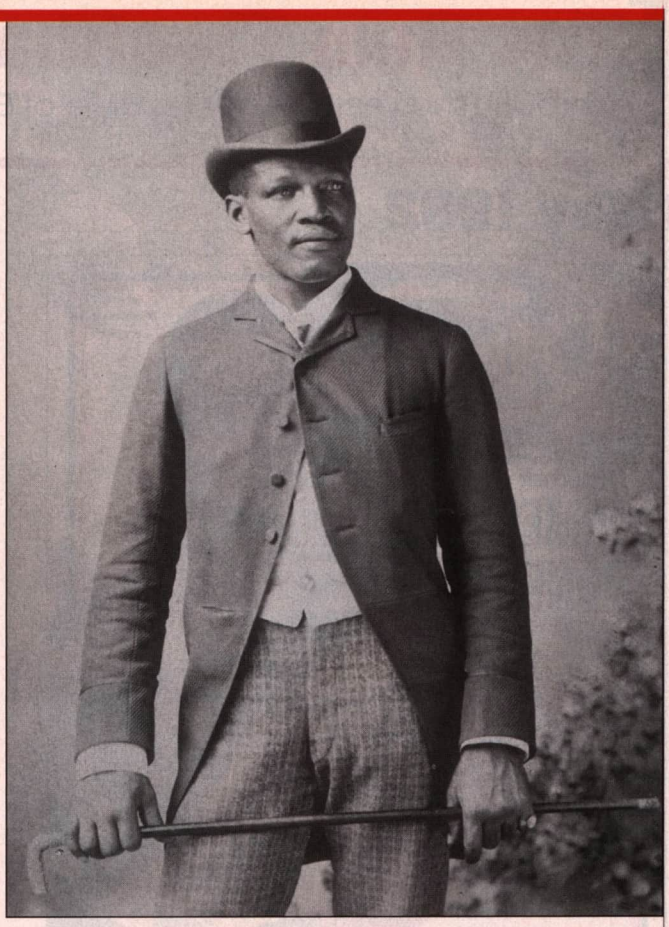
Peter Jackson



Birthdate: July 3, 1861
Date of Death: July 13, 1901
Birthplace: St. Croix, Virgin Islands
Nickname: The Black Prince
Weight Class: Heavyweight
Record: 45-4-5 (30) with 31 no-decisions
Titles held: British Empire heavyweight, Australian heavyweight
Best Performances: James J. Corbett (D 61), George Godfrey (KO 10), Peter Maher (KO 2), Jem Smith (KO 2), Tom Leeds (KO 30), Frank Slavin (KO 10), Joe McAuliffe (KO 24), Jack Fallon (KO 2), Denver Ed Smith (KO 5)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 1990
Background: Born in St. Croix and moved to Australia with his parents when he was six years old. Is therefore usually considered an Australian fighter ... Began working on ships when he was 14 and drew attention to himself when he used his fists to quell a mutiny. The resulting press from the incident alerted boxing manager Larry Foley to Jackson's fighting potential, and he launched a pro career in April 1882 in Sydney, Australia ... Won Australian heavyweight title in September 1886, stopping Tom Leeds in the 30th round ... Moved his base of operations to the United States in 1888, and won the so-called "colored" heavyweight title by knocking out George Godfrey in December '88 ... Regrettably, reigning heavyweight champion John L. Sullivan refused to defend the title against a black man, which is probably the only reason that Jackson never became world champion ... Spent time in England in '89, where he won 12 fights in less than three months ... Finished European trip by stopping Peter Maher in Dublin, Ireland ... Most famous fight came in May 1891, when he fought a 61-round draw with future heavyweight champion Jim Corbett in San Francisco. Even though Jackson was past his prime and boxing with an ankle injury, Corbett was extremely impressed: "Jackson could beat any heavyweight I ever saw," said Corbett. "I saw him box an exhibition with (Bob) Fitzsimmons at the old California Athletic Club, and it was like a professor giving a pupil a lesson ... My fight with Peter lasted four hours, so I should know whereof I speak. He has everything, could do everything. Box or slug, he didn't care. I was tired for six months afterward" ... Jackson's 1892 knockout of Frank Slavin in London was described by one reporter as "The grandest glove contest I have ever seen between two big men" ... Unable to get a world title fight, he operated a boxing gym in London and acted in plays, including performing in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ... Contracted tuberculosis and returned to Australia, where he died in 1901 at the age of 40.



An illustration of the Jackson-Corbett match shows "The Black Prince" penetrating Corbett's guard with a left jab. The following year, Corbett won the heavyweight championship from John L. Sullivan.



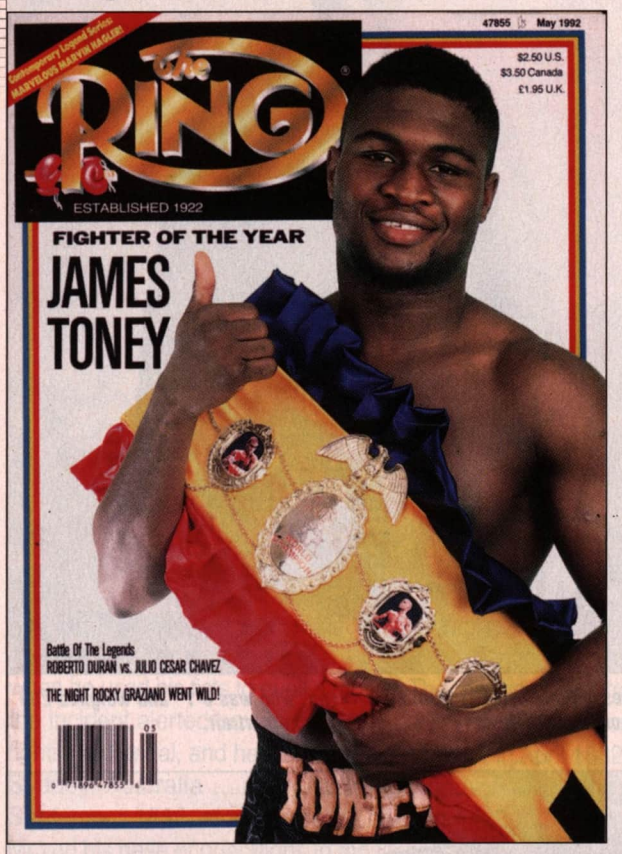
Dressed in the latest fashion, Jackson, who was 6'1" and weighed 200 pounds, cut a dashing figure in this formal portrait.

Jackson was so admired in Australia this elaborate monument was erected at his gravesite at the Toowong Cemetery in Brisbane. He is now widely regarded as the best heavyweight of his era, but also something of a tragic figure because he was shut out of the title picture and died young.

[THE RING Flashback]

Through the years with "The Bible of Boxing"

May 1992



COVER STORY: "Fighter Of The Year: James Toney" was the cover headline, but Jeff Ryan's feature story was titled "Boxing's Mad About James Toney, and James Toney's Mad About Everything."

Toney won THE RING's top honor for 1991 by going undefeated in six bouts, including an 11th-round kayo of Michael Nunn to win the IBF middleweight title. But Ryan focuses on Toney's volatile outside-the-ring personality.

"Sometimes I can see the mercury start to rise, and I know a tantrum is coming," says Toney's manager, Jackie Kallen. "You usually *do* get a warning. If you don't get out of his way then, it's your stupidity. His mood is like a wave. You have to ride with it. If you try to fight it, you'll get wiped out."

Ryan summed up Toney's worldview this way: "Some people look at the world through rose-colored glasses. James Toney peers at it through eyes bloodshot with rage. He doesn't see any difference."

"After Four Unfulfilling Years, Roy Jones Remains Convinced ... Father Knows Best" by Robert Cassidy highlights the relationship between Jones and his father, Roy Sr., who was at that time managing his son's career.

"While less talented members of the 1988 Olympic team have basked in fame and fortune, Jones continues to toil in obscurity," writes Cassidy. "For some reason, that's the way Big Roy and Little Roy want to keep it."

The big problem was Jones' reluctance to sign with a major promoter or manager. He was 16-0 at the time the story was written, but spinning his wheels.

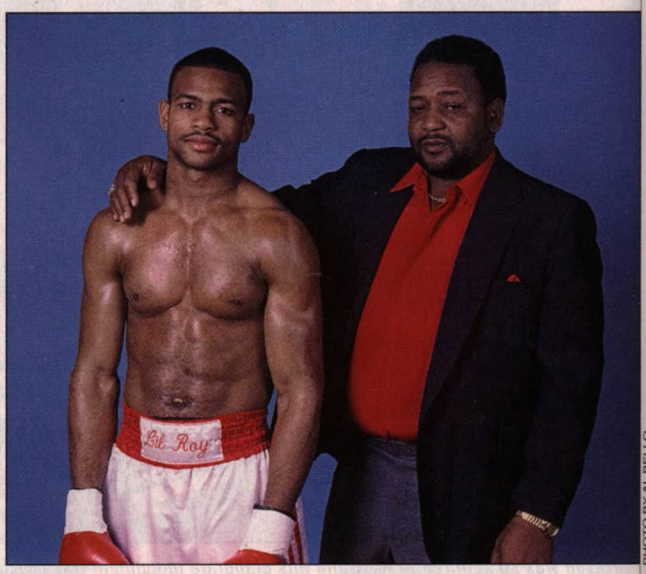


PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Big Roy has a tight grip on his son

World Champions

(THE RING did not have a championship policy in 1992, so the fighters listed below in each weight division are THE RING's number-one contenders for the period ended January 14)

Heavyweight: Evander Holyfield
Cruiserweight: Jeff Lampkin
Light Heavyweight: Thomas Hearns
Super Middleweight: Victor Cordoba
Middleweight: James Toney
Junior Middleweight: Terry Norris
Welterweight: Meldrick Taylor
Junior Welterweight: Julio Cesar Chavez
Lightweight: Pernell Whitaker
Junior Lightweight: Jeff Fenech
Featherweight: Paul Hodkinson
Junior Featherweight: Jesse Benavides
Bantamweight: Orlando Canizales
Junior Bantamweight: Robert Quiroga
Flyweight: Maungchai Kittikasem
Junior Flyweight: Hiroki Ioka

"There's no doubt he needs someone behind him." Main Event's Kathy Duva told THE RING. "A guy like Roy Jones has so much potential, and he's simply not gone anywhere. If a career is handled properly, avenues begin to open miraculously."

As it turned out, father didn't know best, and it wasn't until Jones parted with his father that his career took off.

"Myung Woo Yuh & Khaosai Galaxy: Boxing's Longest Title Reigns End Within Five Days" by Steve Farhood uses Yuh and Galaxy to discuss the longest title reigns in 17 weight divisions. Although there have been changes in the more than 17 years since the article was published, here are the record holders as of January '92:

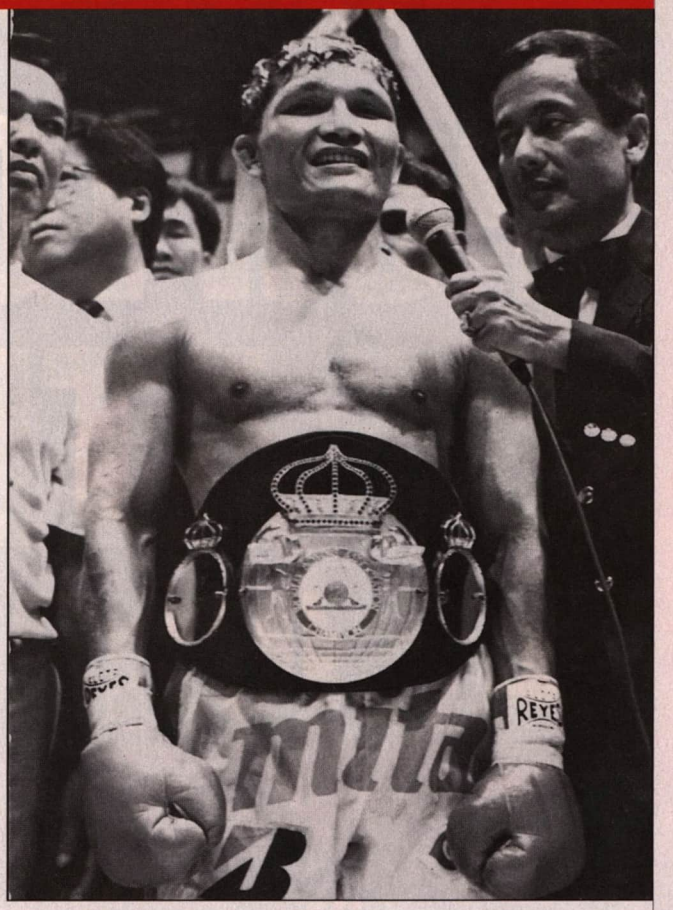
Heavyweight: Joe Louis (11 years, 7 months)
Cruiserweight: Ossie Ocasio (2 years, 9 months)
Light Heavyweight: Archie Moore (9 years, 2 months)
Super Middleweight: Chong Pal Park (3 years, 6 months)
Middleweight: Carlos Monzon (6 years, 9 months)
Junior Middleweight: Thomas Hearns (3 years, 9 months)
Welterweight: Freddie Cochrane (4 years, 6 months)
Junior Welterweight: Bruno Arcari (4 years, 6 months)
Lightweight: Roberto Duran (6 years, 7 months)
Junior Lightweight: Flash Elorde (7 years, 3 months)
Featherweight: Eusebio Pedroza (7 years, 2 months)
Junior Featherweight: Wilfredo Gomez (5 years, 10 months)
Bantamweight: Panama Al Brown (5 years, 11 months)
Junior Bantamweight: Khaosai Galaxy (7 years, 1 month)
Flyweight: Jimmy Wilde (7 years, 1 month)
Junior Flyweight: Myung Woo Yuh (6 years)
Strawweight: Far-lan Lukmingkwan (1 year, 11 months)

"New Faces" by Robert Cassidy features none other than Bernard Hopkins, who had only 15 pro bouts under his belt at the time. Oddly enough, there is no mention of Hopkins' prison record, a theme that would soon become the central focus of most articles written about the man who would go on to win both the middleweight and light heavyweight world championships. Hopkins, however, was already talking like the B-Hop we now know so well:

"I have no silver spoon in my mouth," he tells Cassidy. "I didn't come up with a big-time promoter. I'm getting mine from muscle. I have to take my respect."

"Battle Of The Legends" is a feature in which three experts predict the outcome of a fantasy fight between all-time greats. This installment pits Roberto Duran against Julio Cesar Chavez. The three experts were trainer Emanuel Steward, ABC-TV analyst Alex Wallau, and former junior lightweight and junior welterweight titleholder Roger Mayweather.

Steward picks Chavez to win a close decision, but is outvoted by Wallau and Mayweather, both of whom pick Duran to win via decision. ■



Galaxy held the junior bantamweight title for more than seven years

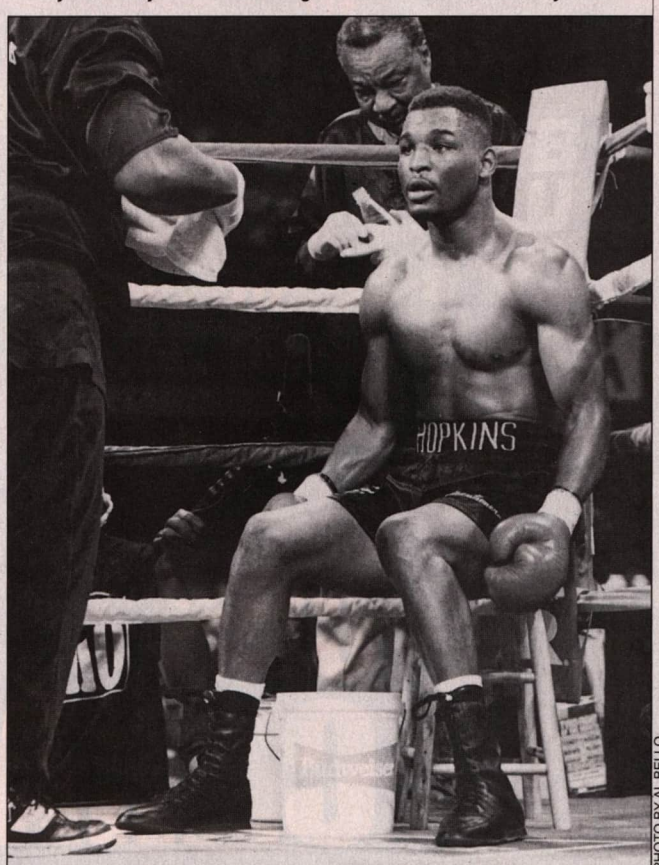


PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Hopkins as he looked in December 1991

POR LOS QUE SE ATREVEN A SUBIR AL RING

CON CARÁCTER

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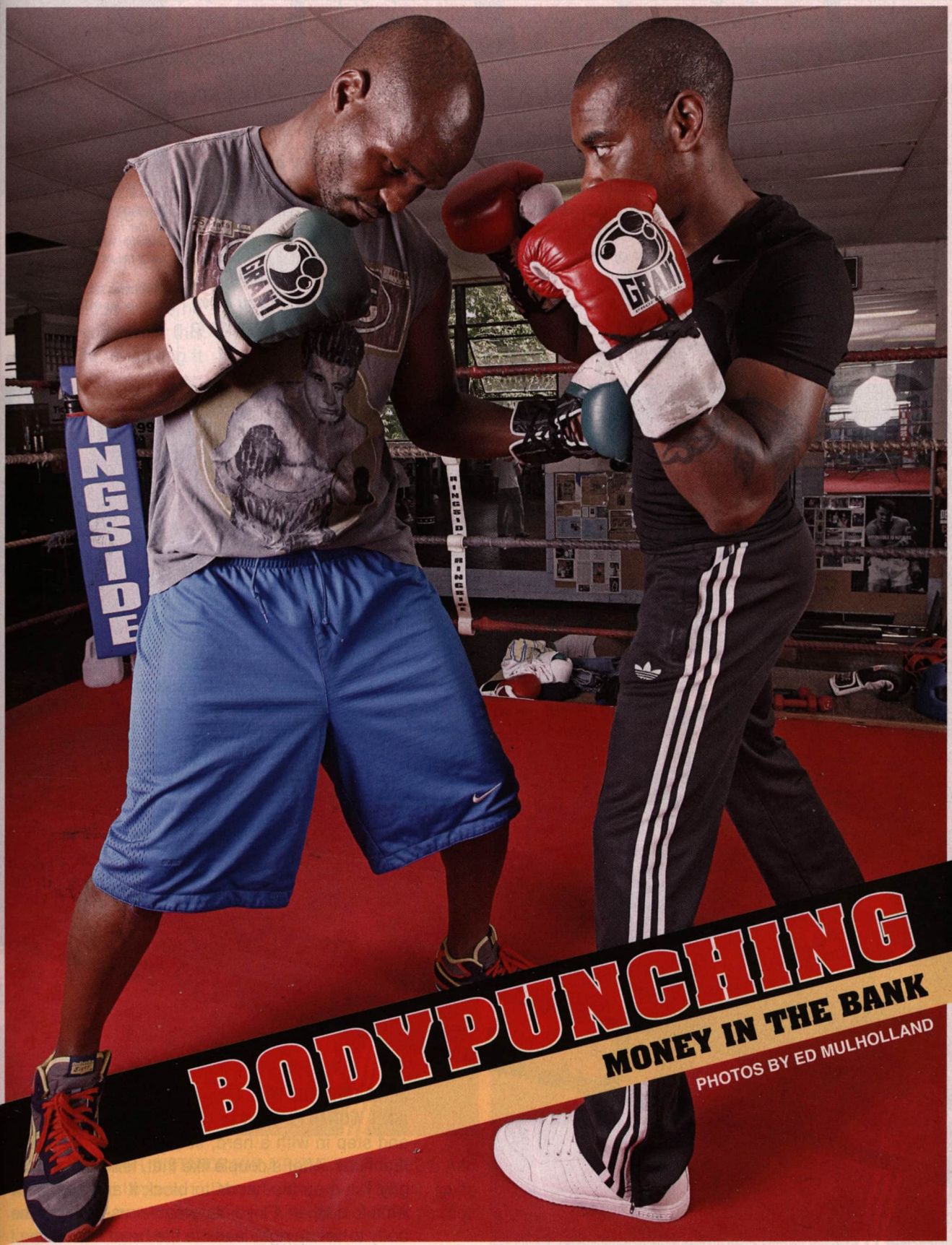
Perfect Execution

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



BODYPUNCHING

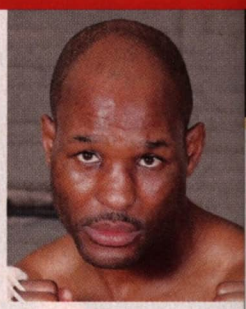
MONEY IN THE BANK

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

A lot of times you'll hear someone say a fighter doesn't like getting hit in the body. Well guess what—no one does. Bodyshots are not something you can shake off like a headshot. That old saying, "Kill the body and the head will fall," is true. Nobody likes getting hit in the body. Guys you can hit on the head all night and not get hurt. You can take out an opponent with a bodyshot if you do it right. Oscar De La Hoya was stopped only twice in his career—once by Manny Pacquiao and once by me. I did it with a bodyshot.

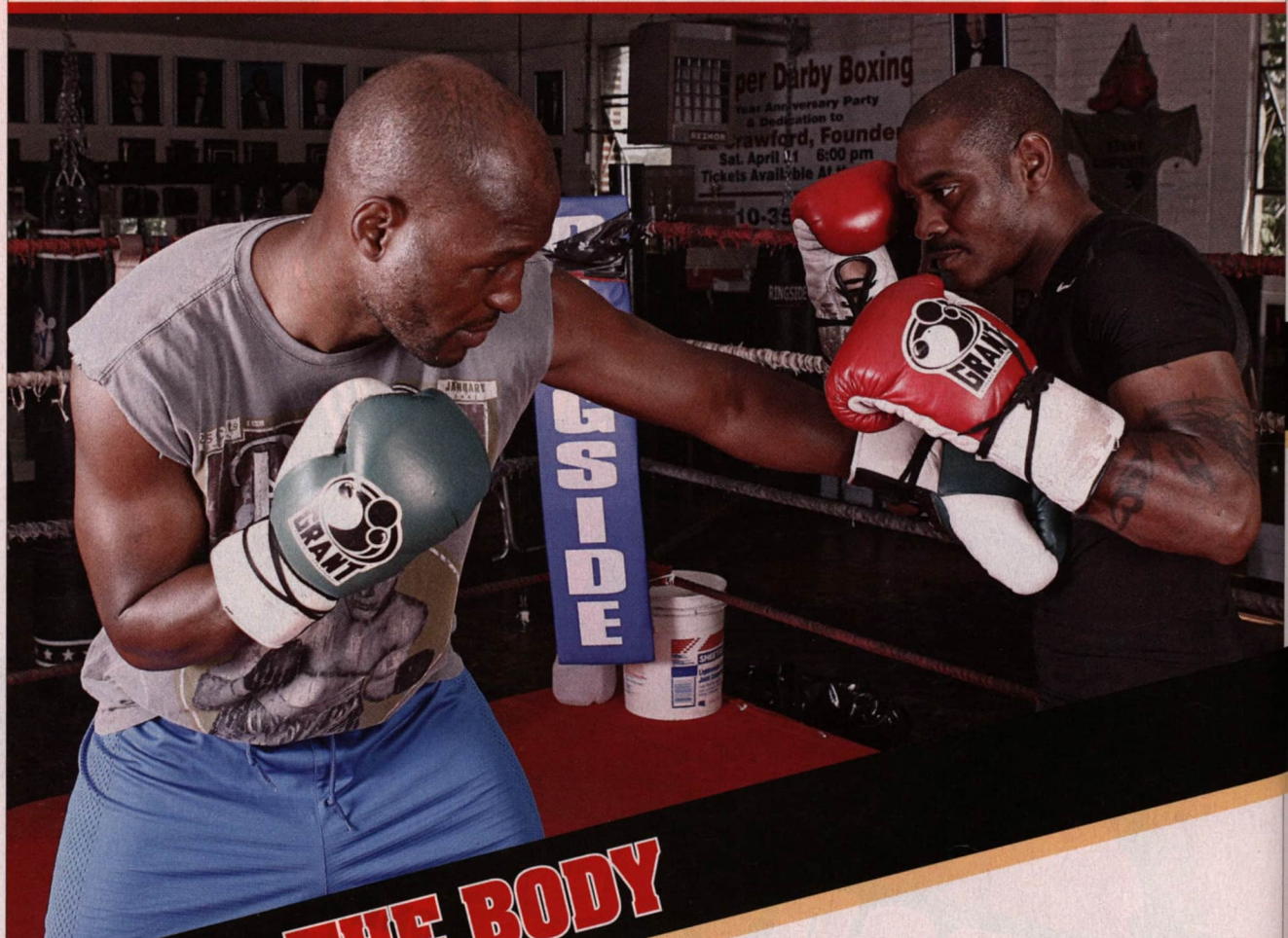
Bodyshots are money in the bank. They pay off in the later rounds because they break a guy down, make it so his legs won't be as fresh as they were in the early rounds. With real relentless body punching early on, about the sixth or seventh round and definitely by the championship rounds, any fighter, no matter who he is, will start feeling it.

You also go to the body to bring your opponent's hands down and create punching opportunities upstairs. That's what the game is about—finding ways to land punches. But as always, you have to know positioning. You never throw a punch to the body from too far out because you leave yourself open and it makes you lunge and you can get countered real easy. You have to be close to punch, not too close, but close enough to be effective. Danny Davis and me break it down.



BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)



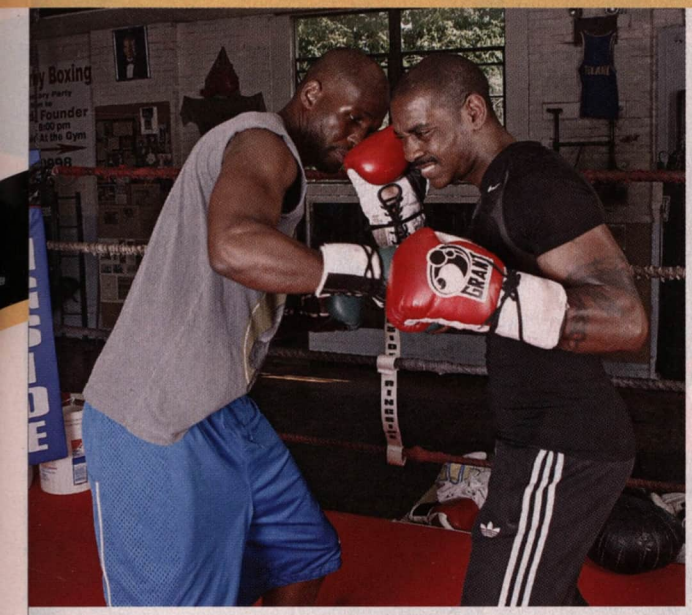
JAB TO THE BODY

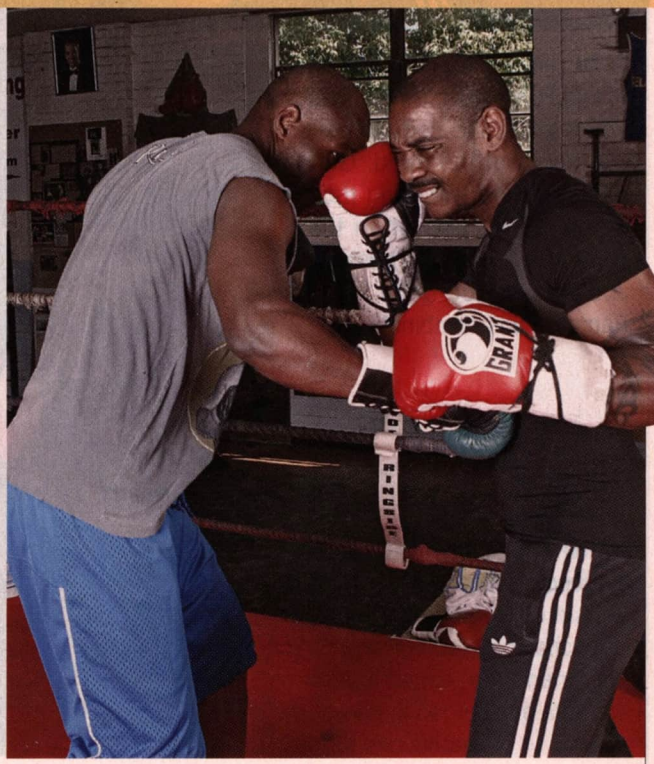
SOME TRAINERS WILL TELL YOU THE JAB TO THE BODY ISN'T WORTH IT. They're wrong. Get your distance and step in with a hard, straight jab to the chest that hurts. After a couple like that, feint with it. Your guy will drop his hands to block it and you know what to do then. Floyd Mayweather uses jabs to the body to set up right leads to the head all the time.

STRAIGHT RIGHT: THE WRONG WAY

THIS GOES FOR ANY BODY-PUNCH: You throw it from too far away; you're going to get countered. Get close to go to the body, but not so close that you smother your punches. As always, get position! You want to hit him and be in position where he can't hit you. From this far out you're making it easy for him.

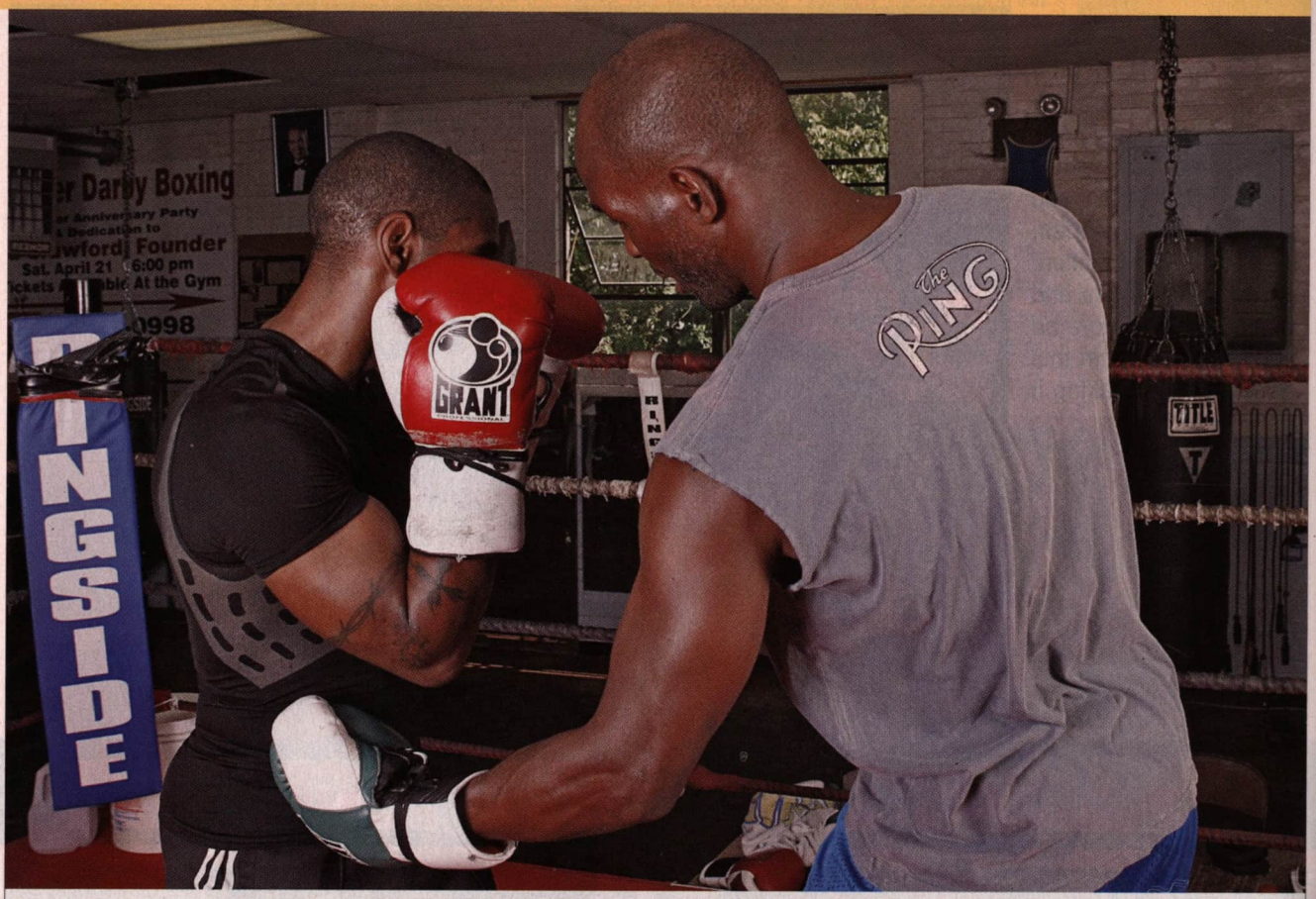
STRAIGHT RIGHT: THE RIGHT WAY





THIS IS THE RIGHT DISTANCE FOR A RIGHT TO THE BODY. And notice too that I'm over to Danny's right when I land it, so he can't counter me. Angles! Angles! And I'm in perfect position to follow the right with a hook. Bang, bang!

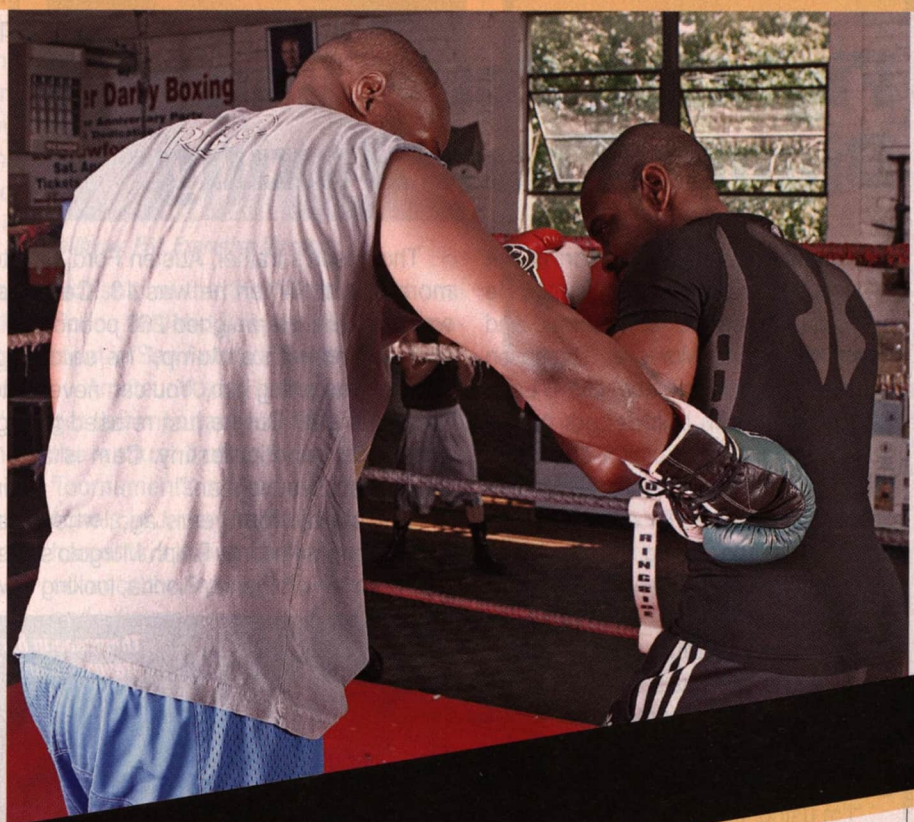
HOOK: CREATE THE OPENING



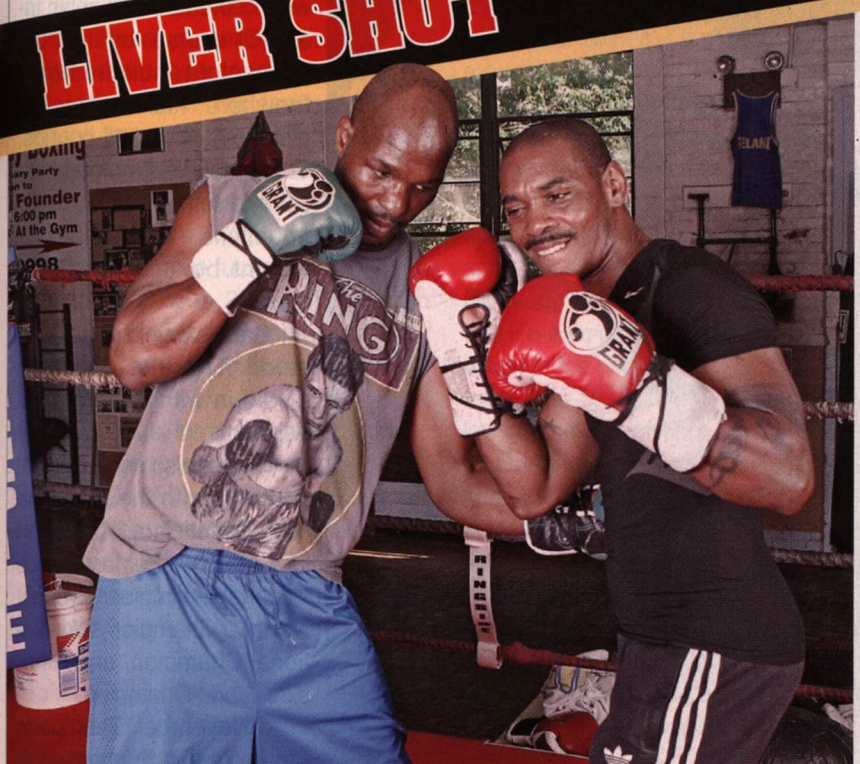
SOMETIMES BODYPUNCHES PAY OFF BEFORE THE LATE ROUNDS. You hook to the body to get a clear shot at the head. Good bodypunches will bring those hands down, and when they come down, you're in business. Joe Frazier got to the Hall of Fame on this combination.

GET AROUND THE ELBOW

IF A GUY'S GIVING YOU HIS SIDE LIKE THIS, OR IF YOU WORK YOUR ANGLES GOOD ENOUGH TO GET OVER THERE, TAKE IT. This is not a kidney punch; it's legal. Sometimes you have to get outside the elbow to land and notice again that there's no way Danny can counter me at this angle. And, he'll be there for my hook after the right lands.



LIVER SHOT



THIS IS LIKE THE ONE I HIT OSCAR WITH. You get hit with a good hook or uppercut to the liver, you're going out, no matter how many sit-ups you do. And notice my form: the right distance, right hand up, chin down, on balance, looking straight ahead. Perfect execution!

By Michael Rivest

Fighting For A Cause Bigger Than Boxing

Lenroy "Cam" Thompson is not your average amateur fighter. He claims that he isn't athletic and never liked boxing. Moreover, Thompson fights in pink boxing gear, with "I Love Boobs" written in bold letters on his trunks. He also sells pink T-shirts and sends the proceeds to a charitable foundation. Nonetheless, Thompson is arguably the most promising amateur super heavyweight on the scene.

Thompson has won nearly every major amateur tournament there is, and has a spot on the U.S. National Team. He's also not about to let his visibility go to waste.

"I'm using it to do good," he said.

Thompson dedicates all of his bouts to breast cancer prevention, hence all the pink (the color of the cause), the T-shirt sales, the Team Cam Foundation, and the, uh, relevant proclamation on his shorts.

"What do you think of the T-Shirts?" he asked. "Aren't they nice? They say, 'Fighting Is Easy When Your Opponent Isn't Breast Cancer.' We've made $3,000 so far and it all goes to the Team Cam Foundation. I'm real happy about that."

Okay, Cam, slow down a bit. Let's start over. What do you mean you're not athletic?

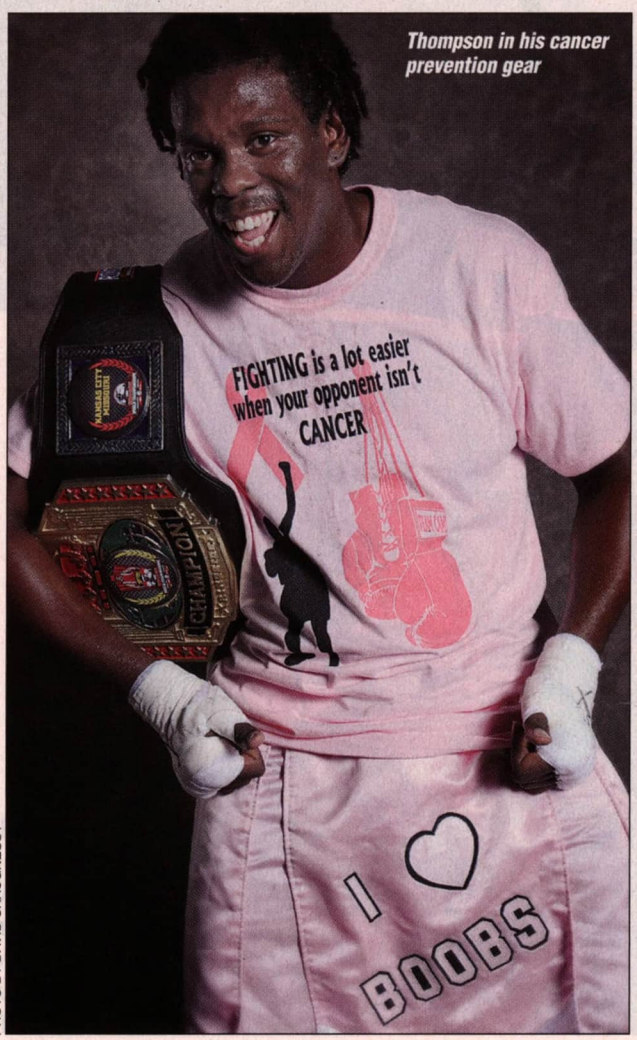
"I was never any good at sports as a kid," he said. "I was uncoordinated and could never make any team. I especially didn't like boxing. I found it too violent."

Thompson's trainer, Austen Ford, is more direct: "When he was 13, Cam was nowhere. He weighed 260 pounds and walked with a slump," he said. "Nature was telling him, 'You can never be an athlete.' But he just refused to accept his genetic destiny. Cam is a very unusual young man."

It all started four years ago, when Thompson walked into Ralph Murgolo's PAL Gym in Fort Pierce, Florida, looking to lose some weight. Murgolo immediately saw a diamond in the rough.

"He showed such potential, and I grew to love him like a son. But let me tell you, he was hard to deal with," Murgolo said with an affectionate laugh.

"Beneath that willfulness, Cam had incredible confidence, cockiness even, a special drive, and he was very, very smart," continued Murgolo. "He knew what he wanted and that was that. There were always girls around him and lots of distractions. But I could see a real sense of purpose and focus in him. He was just an unusual kid."



Thompson in his cancer prevention gear

PHOTO BY DAVID SHAUGNESSY

Murgolo took Thompson and his unusualness all the way to the 2008 Olympic trials. Of course, by then the overweight, hunched over "nowhere" kid was ancient history. At 6'3", 225 pounds, Thompson had molded himself into something nature did not intend—a super heavyweight boxer with a real future.

"Cam is an old soul," Ford said. "There's a wisdom mixed in with that youthful naiveté."

There's also serious talent mixed in with the so-called "non-athleticism." Let's just look at 2009: Golden Gloves National Champion, Everlast National Champion, PAL National Champion, and Ringside World Champion.

In November, Thompson took a trip to England as a

member of the U.S. National Team. Overall, the U.S. team did not do too well against the Brits, but Thompson charted his own course, and won both of his bouts. The kid is on fire.

Ask Bryant Jennings, a promising heavyweight who is 0-2 against Thompson in competition. "Cam is tricky and hard to predict in the ring. He's very smart in there. A lot of people don't know how to take him," Jennings said. "And he's a great person outside the ring too. He really cares about people and is dedicated to social issues."

This brings us to Thompson's pink fashion statement. Isn't that just a little bit for show, an Ali-like flair for getting attention?

"Absolutely not," countered Ford. "A lot of people ask me that, but that's the thing about Cam. For him, nothing is a show. Nothing is an act. He's 100 percent sincere. He's trying to draw attention to breast cancer."

He's drawing attention all right.

"We did have a lot of concerns about him putting 'I Love Boobs' on his shorts," Ford continued. "I mean, we know him, but how will people react?" Team Cam's worries soon faded. "It's like they immediately understand and sense his intentions. They know he's sincere."

Although Thompson's never lost anyone to breast cancer specifically, Ford says, he did lose someone to cancer when he was in his teens and just doesn't like to talk about it. "Cam feels things very deeply and is serious minded about so many issues. I believe that's at the basis of his commitment."

What about the future? "All I'm thinking about now is 2012," Thompson said, referring the Olympic Games in London, "and after that, maybe the Games in 2016."

It's unusual for such a talented kid to not be talking about turning pro. But Lenroy "Cam" Thompson specializes in the road less traveled. At 21-years-old, he already knows how to grab hold of his life and do great things with it.

Everybody should be so unusual.

PAL Still Going Strong

One of Cam Thompson's recent victories was the super heavyweight championship at the 36th Annual National Police Athletic League (PAL) Tournament in San Antonio, Texas.

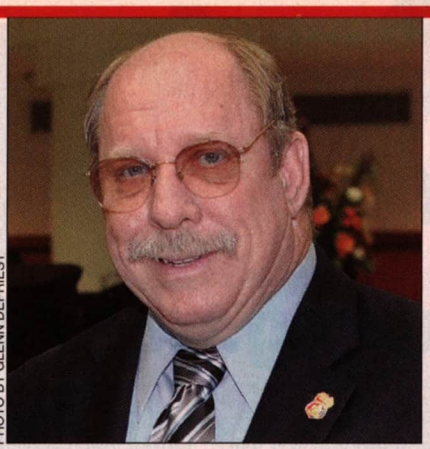


PHOTO BY GLENN DEPRIEST

Dillhyon: PAL Executive Director

Amateur boxing fans must never forget the importance of PAL. Along with the annual National Golden Gloves Tournaments in May and the U.S. Nationals in June, the National PAL Tournaments are one of the ways boxers advance toward the U.S. National Team and ultimately the U.S. Olympic Team. Winners of the PAL National Tournament automatically advance to the U.S. Nationals and, in an Olympic year, to the Olympic Box-Offs.

But there's so much more to the Police Athletic League than national boxing tournaments. Mike Dillhyon, Executive Director of the National PAL, is quick to point out that PAL has quite a history.

"The idea began in New York City in 1914 as a way to bring kids and the police together in a positive way," he said. "There was a need to give kids an alternative to hanging out on the street, and the need remains, of course," said Dillhyon. "The research is pretty clear that if a young person respects a police officer in the ring, the ball field, or classroom, the respect will transfer to the laws that police officers enforce."

Good ideas grow. Today, there are over 400 PAL Member Chapters in over 700 cities and 1,700 facilities throughout the U.S. serving more than two million youths, ages 5 to 18.

"Boxing is our marquee sport," said Dillhyon, "but PAL also features programs in other sports as well as activities like after school tutoring, dance, and cheerleading." ■

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By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Women's Boxing: Is It Safe?

With the 2012 London Olympics set to include women's boxing for the first time, many wonder if it will once and for all dissipate concerns that women fighters are at greater risk than their male counterparts.

A women's demonstration bout was actually held at the 1904 Games, but for most of the 20th century it was banned in many countries. The sport came close to being included in the 2008 Beijing games, but the International Olympic Committee ruled "it would offer no added value to the Olympic program." Many also argued there would be too many mismatches placing female fighters in danger. But over the last several years, the number of women participants in amateur boxing has grown significantly, and fears of mismatches and injuries have dissipated.

Professionally, there was a huge surge in women's boxing in the 1990s, coinciding with women's sports leagues such as the WNBA. Athletes like Christy Martin, Laila Ali, and Lucia Rijker developed large followings. However, today women's professional bouts remain a relative rarity compared to men's bouts.

At one time, the reason could be found in female stereotypes, and many were turned-off at the site of women getting bludgeoned in the face.

Well-known boxer Mia St. John has her own opinions.

"It is a dangerous sport for men and women," said St. John. "I have a son and a daughter, and I certainly wouldn't want either of them to fight. But I think all female sports (with the exception of tennis) lack respect and, most of all, viewers.

"I brought in a lot of attention and publicity, but I couldn't fill an arena or bring in television viewers like Oscar De La Hoya could. However, I do believe boxing is made up of the good old boys club run primarily by Caucasian, older, highly intelligent men. Many of them are chauvinists and have very little respect for women in general."

St. John speaks the truth, but do we still need to worry that there are increased risks to women boxers? Are there enough safeguards in place to protect them against tragedy? Moreover, are these even fair questions to pose?

Chicago fan favorite Rita "La Guera" Figueroa is now recovering after having undergone brain surgery to remove a blood clot on the surface of her brain following a six-round unanimous decision loss to Kita Watkins in Arkansas in November. In April 2005, Becky Zerlentes became the first female boxer to die following brain injuries suffered in a sanctioned amateur match in Colorado. Other than these two, cerebral injuries in female boxers have been a rarity.

Dr. Massimiliano Bianco, a former amateur boxer, a ring physician for the Italian female amateur boxing team, and a professional referee for the Italian Boxing Federation, has conducted considerable research on the medical risks as they relate to women's boxing.

"I believe that even if some differences exist regarding shape, volume, consistency, and function of the brain between the sexes, probably the main

Debra Stroman appears to be okay after suffering a first-round knockout

PHOTO BY JAY LASH

PHOTO BY STEVE SAMOYEDNY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Mia St. John (right) trades punches with Jaime Clampitt

determinants of acute traumatic brain injuries are the same in men and women," said Dr. Bianco.

A physician in the Sports Medicine Unit of the Catholic University in Rome, Italy, Dr. Bianco published a well-received paper in the August 2009 *British Journal of Sports Medicine.* The article, titled "Female Boxing In Italy 2002-2007," included retrospective and prospective data. The former refers to evaluating injuries in all female competitors in Italian bouts. The latter looked at 2,800 pre- and postfight brain, eyes, ear, nose, throat, breast, and gynecologic exams.

His conclusions were that female boxers suffered the same low incidence of injuries as males. Furthermore, women did not develop specific diseases or injuries related to the female reproductive system or breast.

Dr. Bianco and others also researched a comparison between the cognitive function of male and female boxers. They compared 28 female amateur boxers, with no history of concussion (except boxing) with 56 male boxers. They were matched for age, employment, and competitive level. Baseline information, including level of education, occupational status, boxing record, and number of concussions, was correlated with a computerized cognitive test and the athlete's reaction times. The study, sponsored by the Italian Sports Medicine Federation, showed minimal or no differences in baseline cognitive performance with respect to male amateur boxers. The authors concluded that women's boxing seemed to be as safe as male boxing in respect to cognitive function.

Irrespective of whether or not the injuries are different between the sexes, prejudices still exist which can increase female risks.

I worry that women are not examined as thoroughly after a fight as men. I know many ring physicians might disagree, especially since postfight medical examinations have improved. But in the same way that symptoms of women's heart disease often go unrecognized, the same may exist when it comes to boxing injuries.

St. John agrees: "Examined, really, when? I have had 60 pro fights and rarely has someone come to my dressing room to examine me."

Former respected New York boxer Kathy Collins engaged in 19 pro fights before retiring in 2001 following a highly publicized match against Christy Martin.

"Many believe that women can't hit hard enough to cause brain damage, especially if you just get knocked down," said Collins.

"I get told that a lot," agreed St. John. "And I can't even justify that with a reply. It is just ignorant. We go home with headaches, bumps, and bruises. You have to think that irreparable damage is being done to our brains."

"One time sparring, I got a concussion," said Collins. "I came home thinking I did fantastic, but I couldn't remember a thing about it!"

Although anecdotal statistics and the research of Dr. Bianco and others demonstrate that women boxers' health risks are similar to men, medical personnel and trainers can't get the right answers if they don't ask the right questions. I think it's important for those who work with women fighters to understand there are differences between the sexes in response to pain and injury, and to take that into consideration when assessing women after a bout. ■

By Jim Bagg

From Bagg To Worse, 2009 Edition

It seems pretty obvious to the Baggitarius how the boxing year of 2009 will be remembered by future generations: as the year that preceded 2010. After all, 2010 is going to be the year that gives us the richest fight in history, Manny Pacquiao vs. Floyd Mayweather. So 2009 will be one of those years remembered for its proximity to another year, like 1 B.C., or 1491, or 1775, or 2006 (You know, the year before the Baggtastic got his column in THE RING.).

Still, every year, whether historically monumental or not, deserves to be commemorated with year-end awards. And not just the boring, obvious ones that everybody, this mag included, hand out. What the people really want, what they really need, is The Baggies. They need idiots insulted, bozos berated, schmucks schmeared, and Sulaimans called out for behaving like Sulaimans. In fact, there was some consideration given this year to re-naming these awards for the worst in boxing "The Sulaimans." Unfortunately, Jose was angling for three percent of the Baggmeister's paycheck as a sanctioning fee, so that was the end of that.

Last year, Baggie recipients received a postcard featuring a picture of the Oscar De La Hoya statue outside Staples Center. This year, due to another round of Baggie budget cuts, recipients will just receive a congratulatory e-mail. And since the recipients are mostly lowlifes, that e-mail will have a virus attached. Please download the attachment, or at least follow the link to an advertisement for pills that will make your privates stiffer than Ricky Hatton at the end of the Pacquiao fight.

And now, without further delay, your 2009 Baggie winners:

Loser Of The Year: This year, the granddaddy of all Baggie awards goes not to an individual but to a despicable duo, a pair that perpetrated a fraud and put innocent boxers' lives in extreme danger in the process. That duo, of course, is **Antonio Margarito** and his personal glove-loader, **Javier Capetillo**. It's one thing to cheat to get an edge with 'roids that help you run around a track faster or hit a baseball farther. It's another thing entirely to cheat by loading plaster into your hand wraps and then punching people in the head. The level of immorality takes a huge leap, from "I want an unfair advantage" to "I have no regard for human life."

And if you think the Shane Mosley fight was the first time Capetillo reached into his duffel bag of tricks, then you probably would also believe that the one time the Bagginator was

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Capetillo (wearing headband) works on Margarito between rounds

arrested for public drunkenness and indecent exposure was the first time he ever got trashed and left the house wearing only a trench coat and galoshes. The video evidence HBO presented during the Pacquiao-Miguel Cotto pay-per-view was highly compelling, showing Margarito after his win over Cotto with blood on his hand wraps just like Naazim Richardson said he saw before the Mosley fight and with some sort of a sharp edge cracking its way through the exterior of his wraps. You don't need to be Matlock to put the clues together.

Really, promoter Bob Arum should share in this award for being so supportive of Margarito, and our old pal Sulaiman should get a piece of it too for protesting Margarito's suspension and insisting he'd be welcome to cheat his way to a WBC title in Mexico. Plus, every commissioner who ever stood in the dressing room and should have caught Capetillo but didn't also should enjoy a share of this Baggie. But in the end, the true Losers of the Year are the heinous team of Capetillo and Margarito. Congrats, fellas. Here's hoping Beelzebub has been taking good care of your souls for you.

Imbecile Of The Year: You know all those athletes who get pills from their personal trainers and nutritionists, test positive for banned substances, and claim they didn't know what they were putting into their bodies? Well, they're imbeciles. But they're not as imbecilic as an athlete who buys into an old wives' tale about the nutritional value in urine, doesn't do any actual medical research on the matter, and gives his insides a golden shower every day. In the ring, **Juan Manuel Marquez** is a genius. Outside of it, he's an imbecile.

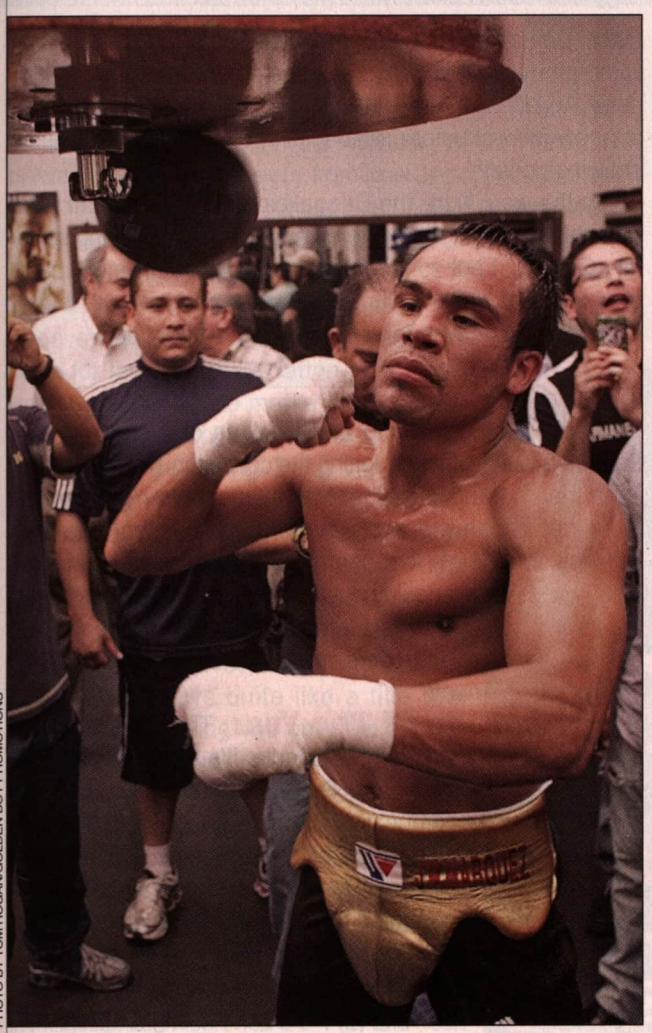


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Marquez also uses customary training techniques

Unless, that is, Marquez' goal was to make sure he didn't go down the Tiger Woods' path and face the temptation of seductresses. Now that the world knows he drinks his own pee, he shouldn't have to worry quite so much about groupies lining up outside his dressing room door.

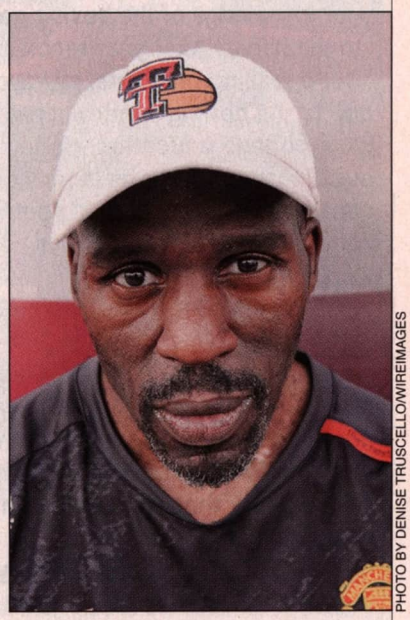


PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIREIMAGES

Uncle Roger: Lifetime Achievement Award

Idiot For The Ages Lifetime Achievement Award: You didn't think we'd get through an entire Baggie Awards ceremony without giving something to a Mayweather, did you? This year, decades of demented behavior pay off for **Roger Mayweather**. Although, if the Baggsquatch is being honest, Uncle Roger is getting this award mostly because the Baggnificent desires the entertainment of listening to his acceptance speech. So, Roger, please come on up and accept your award. Roger? Roger? Oops, looks like Roger skipped out on another scheduled appearance. But that's okay. Something tells the Baggareeno there will be another Baggie for him to accept next year.

Egomaniac Of The Year: The athletic commissioner in Texas is a guy by the name of **Dickie Cole**. The most inept referee in the state of Texas is a guy by the name of Laurence Cole. Young Laurence keeps getting high-profile assignments, even after he gets busted for trying to cover up his microphone and give a fighter advice in the middle of an HBO-televised fight. How is this possible? Because Dickie is Laurence's daddy, and because Dickie has one of those "I can do whatever I want" egos.

If Papa Cole's ego was in check, then when Paulie Malignaggi complained loudly in August that he was going to get screwed against Juan Diaz in Diaz' hometown of Houston, Dickie might have taken his bungling baby boy off the fight and replaced one or two of the assigned judges. In other words, he might have taken steps to create the illusion of a level playing field. But that's not Dickie Cole's style. And, who knows, Texas' sullied reputation might have cost the state a shot at hosting Pacquiao-Mayweather. Nice work, Dick. The Baggoblaster hopes your kid gave you a nice Christmas present (preferably after consulting with Texas' finest gift-giver, Gale Van Hoy).

The Monthly Mailbagg

For this month's Mailbagg, we'll run two e-mails back to back and the Baggster will give them a single response, because the two e-mails are basically saying the same thing. Apparently great minds aren't the only kind that think alike:

I have so much respect for your writing ability and your knowledge of the boxing game, I took your advice "to the bank." After your recommendation, and I quote, "Cotto, trailing on points, by kayo in the ninth. Take that one to the betting window, then to the bank," I bet my kid's college education money on Cotto by a knockout. Because of you he is now doomed to working at a convenience store, handing out Slurpee-like drinks and bags of peanuts to customers who smell bad! Thanks a lot, Baggabunion!

Kurt J. Wagner

You owe me $1,200, you Baggamoron. In your so-called expert opinion before the Pacquiao-Cotto fight you predicted Pacman's loss and advised everyone to take their money to the betting window and take it to the bank. I did exactly that. I encashed my paycheque and laid everything on Cotto.

I hope the RING editor will fire your incompetent ass.

Thanks a lot,
Gregor

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Bagg blew Pac-Man prediction

Kurt and Gregor,

Sorry things didn't work out for you. But the Baggnomenon assumes, since you trust him so implicitly (as you should), that your losses here were balanced with big wins when he told you to bet on Pacquiao against both Ricky Hatton and Oscar De La Hoya. So you should still be saying "thank you" without any sarcastic tone since you've won twice and lost once. And if you waited until Baggstradamus had gotten two in a row correct before trusting him, then shame on you for showing no faith.

By the way, Kurt, the Baggalicious assumes from your tone that your story is made up and you're just having some fun. Gregor … not so sure about you. You really might have blown $1,200. But the Baggalama-ding-dong refuses to feel sorry for anyone who "encashes" his "paycheques."

Wuss Of The Year: This one gets split three ways between Demario Ware, Charman Sinkfield, and Jquante Crews, the three punks who were arrested for the murder of Vernon Forrest. No jokes, bad puns, or sarcasm from the Baggniscenti here. There's nothing funny about shooting and killing an innocent man from behind. We live in an ugly world (fighting the urge to make a Nicolay Valuev joke), and this was as ugly as cowardly acts get.

Incompetent Referee Of The Year: In a way, **Frank Santore** took more abuse than he should have for his handling of the Sergio Martinez-Kermit Cintron "was it a knockout or wasn't it?" debacle. He correctly ruled that a punch knocked Cintron down. Cintron did get up just before the count of 10, which is what Santore ruled. So Santore deserves a little bit of credit. But where he screwed up is in his communication skills—or lack thereof. He waved one hand in the air (half of a "fight's over" gesture), made no clear indication of what he'd ruled, and argued with Cintron over whether a headbutt caused the knockdown while bedlam reigned all around him. You had Martinez celebrating, thinking he'd won, you had Cintron's cornermen entering the ring and freaking out, and you had Santore oblivious to it all, letting the confusion snowball.

In the end, this idea that Martinez should have won by knockout became grossly overstated. But the idea that Santore completely lost control of the situation is undeniable. And Frankie should be aware that when you don't have a daddy acting as a state athletic commission head, you only get so many refereeing screw-ups before it starts costing you assignments.

Blind Judge Of The Year: There are so many deserving candidates for this Baggie, it's a shame that only one can receive the honor. There's Van Hoy, who shamelessly scored the competitive Diaz-Malignaggi fight 118-110 for the local kid. There's Jack Woodburn, who unconscionably had Carl Froch leading Jermain Taylor by four points before Froch pulled off what everyone else thought was a dramatic, come-from-behind knockout. There's Mike Fitzgerald, who thought Vicente Escobedo beat Michael Katsidis 116-112, when a reversed score still might have been a little bit kind to Escobedo.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Ref Santore bungles Martinez-Cintron fight

But none of them could hold off the 11th-hour push by **Pierre Benoist**, who gave Sergio Martinez one stinkin' round in his December bout with Paul Williams. It's just like the old maxim says: Never trust a guy from New Jersey named Pierre. If you met a French guy named Fred, you'd be suspicious, right? Same thing here. Benoist, please quit judging and go take a long walk off a short Pierre.

Worst Name For A Fight Of The Year:

Whoever decided **"The Battle Of East & West"** was a cool name for the Pacquiao-Hatton fight might want to get out of the marketing business and start writing children's books instead. That name is so boring, Bagg Van Winkle falls asleep every time he gets to the ampersand. Was "Hit-Man vs. Pac-Man" too catchy and visually appealing? Even "The Monster & The Mooner" or "Bad-Ass vs. Bare Ass" would have done the trick. But "Battle Of East & West"? Nothing attracts pay-per-view buys quite like a title that sounds like its taking you on a trip back to high school and making you sit through a double period of history and geography.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Guadalupe De Leon, who threw unbeaten featherweight Derrick Wilson for a guada-loop by coming to fight in their four-rounder on the Bernard Hopkins-Enrique Ornelas undercard in Philadelphia. Wilson was 5-0-1 (2) and fresh off a tremendous upset win on Versus' *Fight Night Club* when he ran into the 7-9 (4) De Leon, but after the first round, the next three all belonged to the determined underdog, who prevailed by split decision.

De Leon hails from Mission, Texas, and apparently his mission is to get his record up to the .500 mark. If he can get himself one more fight against a prospect who assumes he's in for an easy night, he'll get there. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

DeLeon (right) en route to Stingray Award

PHOTO BY JEFF FUSCO/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 114, Blue Bell, PA 19422.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Funeka Shafted

The Ali Funeka-Joan Guzman fight was another example of the many ills of boxing. If you looked past the fact that by the time the fight took place Funeka was 17 pounds over the lightweight limit, you saw an entertaining fight. It was pretty obvious, however, that round after round Funeka was building a sound lead. That is until three judges twisted the outcome to a majority 12-round draw. I turned off the television and didn't even watch the Bute-Andrade rematch. Instead, I grabbed a copy of my December 2009 issue of THE RING and added Ali Funeka D 12 Joan Guzman to the "Decade of Controversy" list provided in that issue. It's easy to see why so many fans are disgusted with boxing.

ALLIE TARANTINO
New Rochelle, NY

Ali, Oops!

To anyone who sees the current Muhammad Ali and remarks that he is a "pitiful sight," that's in your mind, not his. Ali is simply doing what should be done in the face of debilitating illness—he just keeps carrying on. He is not interested in misguided pity and feels none for himself. I know this because I, too, am afflicted with a crippling health condition and do not wish to be thought of as pathetic. Ali has been an exemplary role model to me, a white man, since I was 13 and never more so now that I am 59. We just keep carrying on. We are "wounded, not defeated."

RICHARD HAGLUND
Mound City, KS

Ban Benoist

In a world where MMA fights are getting so much attention, it is an absolute disgrace to boxing to have Pierre Benoist continue to judge fights. How can boxing possibly expect to attract new fans when clowns like Benoist consistently score fights as if they are watching a different fight than the one they are supposed to be judging. I was so infuriated after Benoist's ridiculous scoring of the Paul Williams-Sergio Martinez fight, I took it upon myself to make a call to the New Jersey State Athletic Commission and personally air my grievance with this fraud of a judge. I'm sure my complaints fell on deaf ears. But if the boxing community does nothing when we see these injustices we are doing a disservice to the sport. Finally, kudos to Max Kellerman for calling out Benoist by name at the end of the fight.

BRIAN LATERRA
Laterra76@hotmail.com

Darchinyan Missing

I really liked THE RING 100 and how you ranked the fighters. But how can you leave out Vic Darchinyan? He holds multiple titles.

LUIS OCASIO
luis_ocasio81@yahoo.com

Editor's note: Darchinyan was ranked 53rd in "THE RING 100," but

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Joan Guzman has his nose bloodied by a right hand from Ali Funeka in a fight that ended in a majority draw. Like many others, reader Allie Tarantino wrote to express his disgust at the decision, which most observers believe should have gone to Funeka.

due to a technical error the page containing numbers 51 through 55 was missing from the issue. The other fighters who were on the same page were Nobuo Nashiro (51), Joseph Agbeko (52), Luis Collazo (54), and Zsolt Erdie (55). THE RING apologizes to all five fighters.

A Great Tradition

I wanted to formally thank you for the acknowledgment of the 27th "Annual Battle of the Badges: FDNY vs NYPD" in the December 2009 issue of THE RING. It was a significant year, as the score was tied at 13-13. Over 4,000 spectators were in attendance at Madison Square Garden. As promised, it was an exciting night. The FDNY Bravest Boxing Team came back from being down 3-0 to beat the NYPD Fighting Finest with a 7-5 victory. But aside from bragging rights, the NYPD and FDNY come together each year to raise money for various charitable organizations. This year, we raised money for the Wounded Warrior Project and to open a "Cops And Kids" boxing gym in Brooklyn.

MICHAEL RENO
FDNY Bravest Boxing
Team Captain

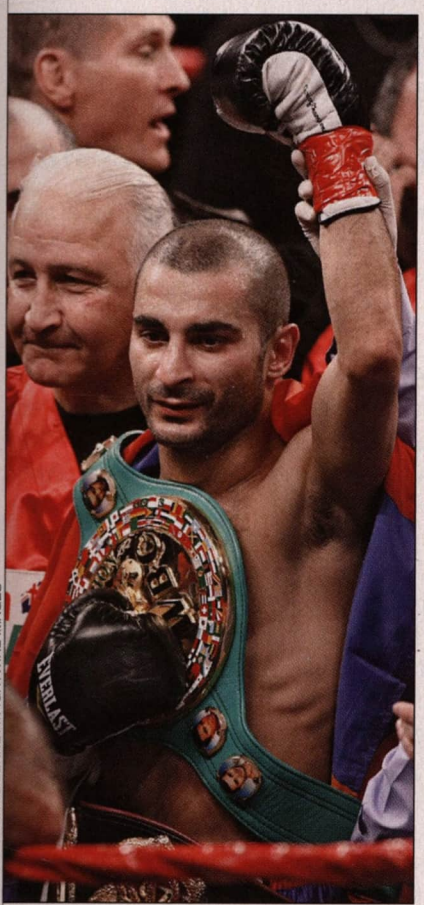
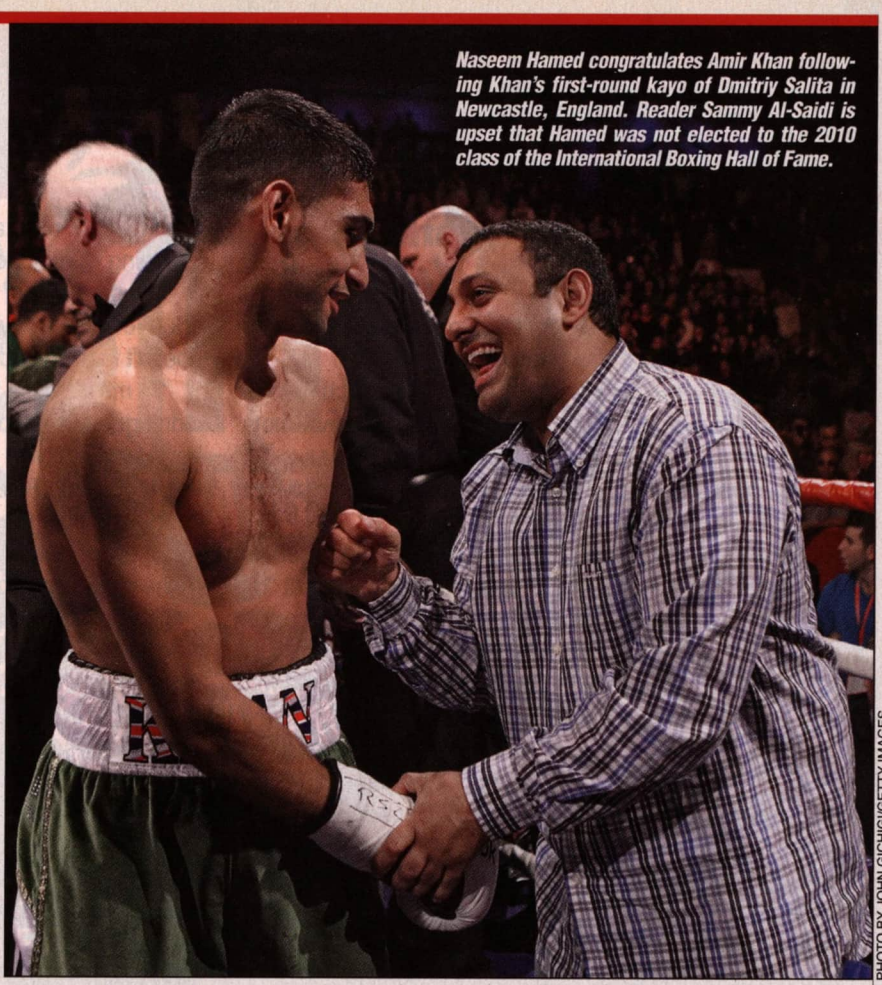


PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Vic Darchinyan has his arm raised in victory after knocking out Tomas Rojas. Many readers, including Luis Ocasio, wondered why Darchinyan wasn't rated in "THE RING 100" that appeared in the January 2010 issue.



Naseem Hamed congratulates Amir Khan following Khan's first-round kayo of Dmitriy Salita in Newcastle, England. Reader Sammy Al-Saidi is upset that Hamed was not elected to the 2010 class of the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Where's Naz?

How can "Prince" Naseem Hamed not be elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame? Hamed was a better featherweight fighter then Danny Lopez. Hamed won all the featherweight belts, was ranked the number-one featherweight in the world, and was in the pound-for-pound rankings. He beat Tom Johnson, Cesar Soto, Wilfredo Vazquez, Kevin Kelley, Wayne McCullough, Paul Ingle, Vuyani Bungu, and Manuel Medina. He brought excitement and showmanship to a small weight class and changed the economic structure of the smaller-weight divisions. I want all the writers who didn't vote for Hamed to watch his fight with Kevin Kelley and look at the entrance and the fight. Guys like Mike Tyson, Oscar De La Hoya, Arturo Gatti, and Hamed took our sport to the next level. My man Paul Malignaggi is right: Boxing is full of s_ _ _.

SAMMY AL-SAIDI
sammyalsaidi@yahoo.com

Dirrell Unfairly Derailed

I was part of the sellout, extremely partisan crowd that saw Carl Froch defeat Andre Dirrell in Nottingham. I was, however, not part of the cheering crowd after the verdict was given. Dirrell was robbed. After the fight, Froch gave an honest account of the contest, admitting it was a stinker, but he omitted the fact that Dirrell clearly won. It couldn't have been easy for young Andre to come into the lion's den and employ a fight winning, if not exciting, strategy, but he did. Andre you deserved a fair decision and on behalf of real British fight fans—sorry and well done.

JAMES HIGGINS
Nottingham, England ■

[Looking Ahead]

By Don Stradley

Estrada Next For Adamek

Cruiserweight world champion **Tomasz Adamek**'s next test at the heavyweight level will be on February 6 against Providence, Rhode Island, heavyweight **Jason Estrada**. The good news is that Estrada is a younger, fresher challenger than Adamek's last opponent, the shopworn Andrew Golota. The bad news is that Estrada weighs around 250 on a 6'1" frame and isn't known as a puncher, having stopped only four of 18 opponents.

But lest you think Estrada is just the latest soft American heavyweight to get a high profile bout, keep in mind that "Big Six" Estrada was one of America's top amateurs, representing the U.S. at the 2004 Olympics. As a pro, doing most of his fighting on the New England casino circuit, Estrada has scored wins over some solid journeymen, namely **Robert Wiggins**, **Charles Shufford**, **Lance Whitaker**, **Derek Bryant**, and most recently, **Zuri Lawrence**. He dropped a majority decision to **Travis Walker** in 2006 and **Alexander Povetkin** last April.

When THE RING spoke to Estrada in December, he acknowledged that this was a big opportunity, but was treating Adamek as just another opponent.

"I'm as excited as I am for any other fight," said Estrada. "I've been doing this for so long that it's becoming easy.

"The only difference is that I've never had so much time to get ready. I have an extra eight weeks. I don't have to rush. I want to work hard and come in at the best shape of my life. Prepping is going to make all the difference."

Estrada: Much tougher test than Golota

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The prospect of fighting at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey, where Adamek has become a cult hero, doesn't faze Estrada either.

"To me it's not a big deal. I've fought out of the country and didn't get support out there. At least it's on the East Coast. I have family in New York and New Jersey, so it's not an issue. I'm half Puerto Rican; that side of the family comes to all my fights, and they are a presence," said Estrada.

One wonders if Adamek's camp chose Estrada because of the Rhode Islander's perceived lack of punching power.

"It's possible, but their mistake is that I'm faster than him," said Estrada. "He probably thinks he's faster than me, but he's not. I've seen some of his fights. As for my punching, all the people who have been in there with me know I can hit. They always change their game plan when I hit them, and they start surviving. That's why I don't have a lot of knockouts. Experienced fighters like Shufford know how to survive.

"When I want to, I can take a guy out. I prefer to box their head off and make them look like they don't belong in there with me. I don't go crazy. That's not for me. The game is boxing."

Showtime's "Super Six" Returns

The next round of the Showtime "Super Six" tournament gets underway March 6 as **Arthur Abraham** faces **Andre Dirrell** at the Agua Caliente Casino, in Rancho Mirage, California.

"King" Arthur has certainly been impressive of late, while Dirrell remains a talented but flawed fighter who slips into bad habits. But despite Abraham being a more solid, accomplished fighter, Abraham-Dirrell is a pick 'em fight. Dirrell has some natural advantages, including height, reach, and mobility, but physical attributes aren't the only reason we're giving him a chance against the formidable Abraham.

Dirrell's wishy-washy style cost him on two of the three scorecards against **Carl Froch** in his first tourney bout, and since another loss would be devastating in the tourney rankings, we imagine Dirrell will be much more aggressive and focused this time. But if Dirrell tries a bolder fight plan against the rugged Abraham, does he risk getting nailed? You bet he does. That's why it's pick 'em time.

Listen Up

Nonito Donaire returns to the ring February 13 at the Las Vegas Hilton where he'll face **Gerson Guererro** as the main event of Top Rank's "Latin Fury 13/Pinoy Power 3" pay-per-view. Also on the card, **Fernando Montiel** faces **Ciso Morales**, **Eric Morel** takes on **Gerry Penalosa**, and **Mario Santiago** meets **Bernabe Concepcion**. ■

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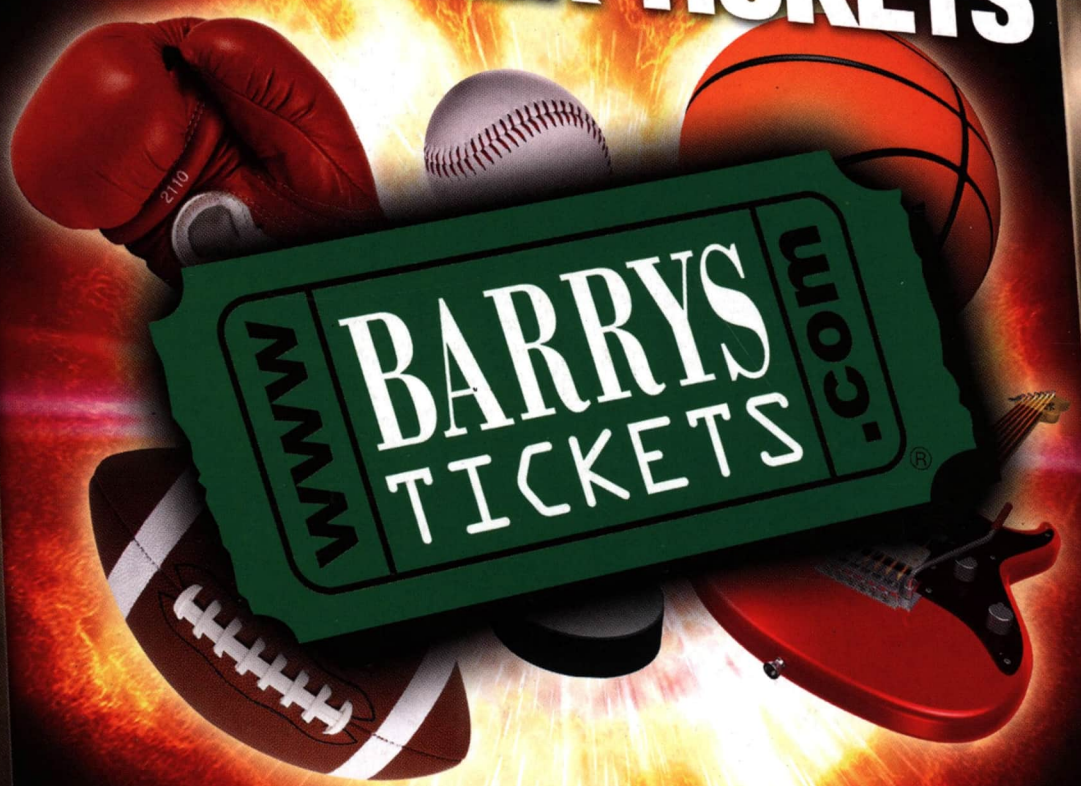

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